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READ II

Year III - Annual Progress Report

Period: October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020



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Acronyms

ADA	Amhara Development Association
bTG	blue Tree Group
CBO	Community Based Organization
CC	Cross-Cutting
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CLLs	Community Literacy Leaders
CM	Crisis Modifier
CO	Community Outreach
COE	Center of Excellence
CCA	Continuous Classroom Assessment
CRA	Community Reading Activity
CRU	Crisis Response Unit
CS	Cluster Supervisor
CTE	College of Teacher Education
CVDA	Common Vision for Development Association
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
DSD	Deputy School Director
EDA	Emmanuel Development Association
EDC	Education Development Center
EE	Effectiveness Evaluation
EGR/W	Early Grade Reading and Writing
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EPD	Enhanced Professional Development
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
EWG	Early Warning System
FCA	Formative Continuous Assessment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HQ	Headquarters
IAI	Interactive Audio Instruction
IC	Institutional Capacity
ICA	Institutional Capacity Assessment
ICBT	Institutional Capacity Building Team
IC-Team	Institutional Capacity Team
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISP	Institutional Strengthening Plan

ID	Internally Displaced
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Result
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IWD	International Women's Day
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
KEG	Knowledge Exchange Group
KA	Kebele Administration
KETB	Kebele Education and Training Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEMA	Local Education Monitoring Approach
LIP	Local Implementing Partner
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MEDAL	Monitoring Evaluation Database Adaptive Learning
MOE	Ministry of Education
MT	Mother Tongue
MTL	Mother Tongue Language
NEAEA	National Education Assessment and Examination Agency
NEC	National Education Cluster
NGO	Non-Government Organization
ODA	Oromia Development Association
OWDA	Organization for Welfare and Development in Action
PAW	Parent Awareness Workshop
PIRS	Performance Indicator Reference Sheet
PSS	Psychosocial Support
PST	Per-Service Training
PTSA	Parent Teacher Student Association
RDQA	Routine Data Quality Assessment
READ	Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed
READ CO	Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Community Outreach
READ M&E	Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Monitoring and Evaluation
READ TA	Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Technical Assistance
REBs	Regional Education Bureaus
RICT	Regional Institutional Capacity Team

SDs	School Directors
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SG	Savings Groups
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SOW	Scope of Work
SMS	Short Message Service
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region
SRGBV	School-related Gender-based Violence
SRMs	Supplementary Reading Materials
SSST	Student Success and Support Toolkit
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
TDA	Tigray Development Association
TDP	Teacher Development Program
TELDD	Teaching and Education Leaders Development Directorate
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
T&T	Trace and Trace
TOR	Term of Reference
ToTs	Training of Trainers
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TVET	Technical, Vocational, Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNICEF	United Nation International Children Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WEOs	Woreda Education Offices
WVI	World Vision International
ZED	Zonal Education Department

Executive Summary

Building on the momentum created during the first and second project years, the USAID/Ethiopia READ II project continues to consolidate its support to the Ministry of Education (MOE) and target Regional States Education Bureaus (REBs) of Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR), Somali, and Tigray in their efforts to improve the reading and writing skills of G1-8 students. This performance progress report covers the period October 1, 2019 through the end of September 2020 and highlights major accomplishments achieved and challenges encountered. A summary of major accomplishments is highlighted below by intermediate result.

The COVID-19 global pandemic, and the prevention and mitigation measures that were instituted by the Government of Ethiopia, Creative Associates and our project partners in response to it, had a dramatic impact on READ II and our beneficiaries over the past year, with long term implications for the trajectory of the project over its remaining life span. The changes created by the COVID-19 pandemic and rescoping of project program description have been the two major factors that affected project normal operations during the second half of the performance period. The rescoping was done at the request of USAID, due to a shift in funds availability. In the rescoping process, project tasks and activities were prioritized to create i) CORE priority activities and ii) OPTIONAL activities, with core activities being fully funded and Optional activities to be funded if additional Mission funding becomes available. As the result of the rescoping, some of the systems strengthening components such as support to Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) to strengthen pre-service and in-service teacher education system has been terminated or diluted, plans to scale up READ II to wider geographical coverage have been suspended, and support to English has been reduced in the interest of achieving some positive short-term impact on the reading achievement of early grade students by 2023.

IRI: Improved classroom reading and writing instruction.

The project implemented many activities under IRI this year. It began with refresher training of G1-8 Mother Tongue (MT) teachers, initial training of G1-8 MT mentors, and development of training materials and the commencement of training for G1-8 English teachers. The English teacher training was interrupted by the COVID-19 school closures and the national State of Emergency and will not be completed within the current program description unless additional funds are made available for optional activities. However, READ II is working with the MOE to adapt the English Teacher Training package into video format for national rollout so that teachers who were not trained will be able to access the videos in due course.

After the declaration of the State of Emergency, the IRI team pivoted to the use of TV and radio broadcasting and the READ II mobile Interactive Voice Response (IVR) hotline to reach out to students and teachers.

For students, two sets of activities were undertaken. First, READ II contracted a local broadcasting production company called Whiz Kids Workshop to broadcast their preexisting Tsehay Loves Learning (TLL) literacy-focused children's television programs and to adapt them for radio broadcast in all seven READ II target languages. Secondly, READ II supported REBs to

adapt primary literacy lessons from the curriculum into radio scripts, which were later recorded and broadcasted on the regional government radio channels.

One of the frequently asked question about the TLL programs, and other remote learning interventions during COVID-19, has been around monitoring of their reach and impact. While exploring some options for conducting a comprehensive survey of the program, the READ II MEL team conducted a mobile survey to learn about the accessibility of the program to students and the support students receive from parents. The survey was conducted from July-August 2020 in the seven READ II target regions. 139 parents, 139 students, and 22 woreda education office (WEO) officials randomly selected and participated in the survey. Findings indicated that household media access is satisfactory as most respondents (51%) owned radios, 84% of which are in rural settings. 30% of respondents owned TVs, of which 82% were from urban areas, indicating that use of radio is more prominent in rural areas and access to TV is higher in urban areas. The survey also indicated that 60% of the respondents had access to TLL programs. However, parental support to their children to benefit from TLL was found to be limited for several reasons. The survey indicated that children read with their peer groups or alone more than they do with their parents.

Parents mentioned several challenges around home learning. 16.6% cited electricity and power interruptions, and 19.1% cited lack of children's focus, attention, and interest for home studies, 30.8 % cited not having the right skills and the busy schedule of families; 13.3% cited lack of materials, such as supplementary reading materials and materials for writing, teaching and learning, and 20% indicated lack of experience supporting home-based learning as challenges faced.

To engage teachers during COVID-19 period, READ II made use of already-existing content for MT teachers on the mobile IVR hotline to remind them of the fundamental principles of teaching reading.

During Y3, the project distributed more than 1.080 Million copies of supplementary reading materials (SRMs) in local languages and English to reading camps and schools. Government counterparts reviewed and validated 179 English titles donated by Books for Africa (BFA) out of which 174 titles (97%) were approved for distribution.

In addition, READ II provided training and technical guidance to local publishers and printers who are members of the Ethiopian Publishers and Printers Association (EPPA).

The READ II pre-service component made good progress on the training of Colleges of Teacher Education (CTE) instructors from five colleges on CTE-led continuous professional development (CPD) in the third and fourth quarters, by means of a virtual training program using the Zoom online meeting platform.

IR 2: Strengthened community engagement in educational activities.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 this year, READ II has made noteworthy gains under Intermediate Result 2. Local Implementing Partners (LIPs) carried out most planned activities at the community, school, and home levels before COVID-19. Project staff continued to regularly engage LIPs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period. READ II IR2 team provided a 10-day

refresher training to 80 LIPs staff via Zoom. The project also conducted remote follow-up and quarterly review meetings to provide feedback to LIPs.

The project established 5,968 Reading Camps and trained 11,656 volunteer Community Literacy Leaders (CLLs) and supported their operations in the first half of the year. The volunteers have been motivated and sustained through continually expanding savings groups and access to formal employment opportunities. The project also reached 38,859 parents and caregivers to establish Reading Corners in their homes.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, READ II's mobile hotline as well as virtual meetings via Zoom became indispensable ways to reach staff, partners, and beneficiaries. READ II and its partners collected over 30,000 contact numbers of parents and volunteer CLLs to provide outreach support via the hotline. In addition to hotline promotion, the project made phone calls and sent text messages to 59,719 parents and CLLs. READ II posted 49,515 placards encouraging usage of the mobile hotline in public areas where the project is being implemented. These efforts resulted in 26,886 parents and CLLs calling into the hotline center.

IR 3: Education administrators' capacity increased

Project Year 3 started with a flurry of activity for IR 3, with training of School Directors (SDs), Cluster Supervisors (CSs), and WEO supervisors on School Instructional Leadership (SIL), especially on their roles to support Early Grade Reading activities.

The highlight of the year, which was unfortunately cut short by the COVID-19 State of Emergency, was the commencement of joint monitoring visits through which READ II staff and REB counterparts visited schools and reading camps together to collect information on project progress and challenges and subsequent joint review meetings at the woreda, zone and regional levels where government representatives discussed what they should do to overcome any identified weaknesses and ensure full implementation. Only Amara Region was able to fully complete this process before the shutdown, while SNNPR completed it up to the zonal level. The level of commitment shown by the officials engaged in this process was inspiring and bodes well for project implementation and sustainability starting in Year 4.

Officials who attended the joint review meetings also received a short training on Change Management, which gave them different perspectives on roles of education managers and further motivation and skills to support project implementation.

READ II project staff took part in the MOE Task Teams on School Reopening in the fourth quarter and made inputs into the School Reopening Guidelines which were promulgated by the MOE in September and which will guide the national process of school reopening and recovery. Work under this component also contributed to a training program for School Directors and Cluster Supervisors on School Instructional Leadership, Psycho-Social Support (PSS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) which will be rolled out early in Year 4.

READ II also made good progress on supporting Mother Tongue Departments at CTEs to plan for their own institutional development and finalized the Interactive Audio Response lessons on English listening and speaking skills for student teachers. These have been broadcasted to the public by the REB radio stations, as they are useful for anyone who would like to learn to speak

English. They will be disseminated to the CTEs once the CTEs reopen in Year 4. An online “Knowledge Exchange Group” (KEG) using the smartphone application Telegram was also created to professionally connect CTE lecturers from different regions and colleges during the COVID-19 closures.

Due to the project rescoping process that took place during Year 3, the pre-service work under READ II will not continue beyond the end of the 2020 calendar year.

IR D: Prepare vulnerable and at-risk populations to succeed.

The first quarter of Year 4 found the IRD team training Cluster Supervisors, School Directors, and Gender Club Coordinators on the “Student Success Support Toolkit” (SSST) – a compilation of eight modules focused on how to identify and support vulnerable students, prevent students from dropping out and make the school child-friendly. This turned out to be fortuitous as schools can use this information as they reopen in Year 4 after the long and difficult period of COVID-19-related closure. During COVID-19, the project reached parents through mobile hotline messaging and broadcasting of TLL episodes. The broadcast was supplemented by sign languages to address the needs of children with special needs as vulnerable group.

READ II also steered the process of preparing schools to receive grants to implement School Improvement Plans (SSST-SIPs). Schools have been divided into two cohorts to make the grant award. The first cohort was set to receive grants when the school closures intervened. Both cohorts will now receive their grants in Year 4, and the scope of the grants has been extended to cover measures that schools may take to make themselves safe from the spread of COVID-19.

IR E: Support to adolescent girls through a structured gender approach

The READ II Gender Team was set for many achievements in the first half of the project year. These included training of school gender club coordinators on the MOE’s Gender Club Guidelines, which were immediately implemented in many schools, Female Leadership Forums through which women leaders at school and higher levels were able to articulate support that they need from the MOE and REBs in order to play a leadership role effectively, a highly successful Women’s Day event in Bishoftu, and an orientation program for female role models from all walks of life who can be invited to address school Gender Clubs to inspire girls and boys to support women in careers.

During the COVID-19 period, the Gender Team expedited the broadcasting of a gender radio drama that explores various widespread gender issues in four regions in Amharic including Amhara, Addis Ababa, SNNP and Sidama, and took steps to prepare the drama for broadcast in READ II’s other six target MT languages in Year 4. The team also did a baseline survey on the reach and impact of the radio drama and prepared a radio drama discussion guide and materials for Gender Club Coordinators to use during club meetings.

Owing to the rescoping of READ II, the project will not be continuing with the female leadership activities in future project years and will focus on supporting gender clubs and assisting schools to begin tackling SRGBV.

IR F: Crisis Modifier

READ II's Crisis Response Unit (CRU) continued to represent READ II at the National Education Cluster (NEC) forum during Year 3. The project contributed to the government's efforts to identify and assess crisis by participating in the NEC-led Education in Emergencies (EiE) assessment. The project provided logistical and technical support to the assessment team coordinated by the NEC in sample woredas in the West and Central Gonder Zones of Amhara Region, Borena Zone of Oromia Region, and Fafan Zone of Somali Region.

A significant accomplishment in this reporting period was the distribution of scholastic and recreational materials to crisis-affected students in 62 woredas in Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, and Somali regions. A total of 452,860 (258,425 M, 194,435F) students in 1,968 schools across the four regions benefited from these materials.

The project conducted monitoring visits to selected target woredas in the four regions and identified important lessons to improve the performance of the intervention. It was learned during these visits that identifying a focal person at woreda level coupled with provision of orientation to the woreda head and the focal person on the procedures of distribution of materials had significantly helped to improve the distribution process. Moreover, persistent follow-up with target woredas through phone calls by the READ II CRU resulted in obtaining more accurate data regarding the distribution.

There were no further activations of the Crisis Modifier in Year 3, and the CRU focused on documenting the previous activations, participating in the National Education Cluster and monitoring crises in the country such as COVID-19, floods and locust infestations. Owing to the project rescoping, the READ II partner responsible for crisis response, IRC, closed out in the fourth quarter and will no longer play a role in the project.

Table I below presents READ II's progress in meeting project Year 3 targets on key performance indicators.

Table I : READ II Progress on key performance indicators (KPI) during Year 3.

Performance Indicators	Intervention Type	Sex	Target		Year 3 Achievements			
			Life of Project	Y3	Q1 Q2 & Q3	Q4	Y3 Total	%
% of learners who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of G2 with USG assistance (ES 1-1)	N/A	Female						
		Male						
		Total						
% of schools using instructional materials consistent with minimum standards of usage (per criteria)	Direct	N/A						
	Conflict	N/A						
	Total							
# of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance (ES. 1-3)	Direct Intervention	Female	1,500,000	900,000	907,176	4539	911,715	101%
		Male	1,500,000	900,000	974,668	4903	979,571	109%
	Conflict/crisis affected	Female	250,000	200,000	193,193	1242	194,435	97%
		Male	250,000	200,000	257,314	1111	258,425	129%
	Total		3,500,000	2,200,000	2,332,351	11,795	2,344,146	107%
	Direct	N/A	3024	3024	3012	-	3012	100%

# of public and private schools received USG assistance (ES. 1-50)	Conflict	N/A	1976	1976	1968	-	1968	100%
	Total		5,000	5,000	4,980	0	4,980	100%
# of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance (ES 1-6)	Direct Intervention	Female	13,371	10,484	9,445	-	9,445	90%
		Male	13,372	10,459	11,243	-	11,243	107%
	Conflict/crisis affected	Female	16	16	16	-	16	100%
		Male	41	41	41	-	41	100%
	Total			27,800	21,000	20,745	0	20,745
Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLMs) that are inclusively representative provided with USG assistance (ES 1-49)	Direct Intervention	N/A	2,600,000	1,100,000	1,050,974	28,860	1,079,834	98%
	Conflict/crisis affected	N/A	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total			2,600,000	1,100,000	1,050,974	28,860	1,079,834
Number of parent teacher associations (PTAs) or community-based school governance structures engaged in primary or secondary education supported with USG assistance (ES-1.13)	Direct Intervention		3,024	1,762	2,962	-	2,962	168%
	Conflict/crisis affected	N/A	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total			3,024	1,762	2,962	0	2,962
Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance (ES. 1-12)	Direct Intervention	Female	2,792	1,850	338	-	338	18%
		Male	2,808	1,850	2,106	-	2,106	114%
	Conflict/crisis affected	Female				-		100%
		Male				-		100%
	Total			5,600	3,700	2,444	0	2,444
Number of persons trained with USG assistance to advance outcomes consistent with gender equality or female empowerment through their roles in public or private sector institutions or organizations. GNDR-8: (Standard)	Direct Intervention	Female	3,000	3,000	2,969	-	2,969	99%
		Male	3,000	3,000	3,706	-	3,706	124%
	Conflict/crisis affected	Female	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
		Male	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
	Total			6,000	6,000	6,675	0	6,675
COVID-19 Period Response Summary Indicators								

¹ For Project Year Two, target was estimated assuming that Local Implementing partners (LIPs) would take time to take off in Year Two. Target for year two was low-175. However, the LIPs started implementation earlier than expected and project exceeded target significantly (147%) (please refer to Project YEAR Two Annual Performance Report). Based on the year two performance, the target for project year three was revised upwards to be 2,962 to replace the original target of 1,762. This revision was made after access to DIS was closed to reflect the change. Hence, the year three figure shows deviation (168%) against the original low target of 1,762.

² Project underperformance on the indicator was the result of two factors: i) Planned trainings for deputy school directors and untrained, school directors was interrupted because of COVID-19; ii) training of SDs and cluster supervisors which scheduled sometime before the end of the implementation year (September 2020) was delayed because of government's decision to reopen schools in October instead of September.

³ Target was estimated based on two trainees per school for 3,000 schools. Government counterparts, however, demanded to include cluster supervisors in the gender training. Project positively responded. The inclusion of cluster supervisors in gender training has increased the number of trainees slightly. The number of school has also increased to 3,010 in Year 3. The light deviation observed has been a result of these two factors.

# of literacy TV and radio content ⁴ broadcast with READ II support	Direct Intervention	N/A	53	53	12	41	53	100%
	Conflict/crisis affected	N/A	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Language	N/A	7	7		7	7	100%
	Total		53	53	12	41	53	100%
# of beneficiaries reached through Mobile hotline messages ⁵	Direct Intervention	N/A	30,000	30,000	4,117	26,247	30,364	101%
	Conflict/crisis affected	N/A	-		-	-	-	-
	Total		30,000	30,000	4,117	26,247	30,364	101%

Challenges encountered:

- COVID-19 has been a complex, major challenge over the past year. Project implementation that requires face-to-face contact was entirely forbidden during the second part of the performance period. Some of the first public institutions to close because of the pandemic were schools, which had been the primary target institutions for READ II implementation. As a result, regular modes of implementation were interrupted throughout the third and fourth quarter.
- **Action Taken:** In response, the project employed distance learning and supported the broadcast of literacy lessons on TV and radio. Virtual training has become the norm during the crisis period. The project engaged teachers, parents, and CLLs through the READ II Mobile Hotline's push/pull messaging, which helps motivate beneficiaries to remain engaged.
- During the /rescoping process, difficulty in predicting budget needs created uncertainties in planning and implementing activities based on the original project description. However, close consultation with and periodic guidance from USAID helped to minimize the challenge, which was resolved by the end of Year 3.

Lessons learned:

- While the traditional approach and structure of direct contact with service providers and beneficiaries and physical visits to sites has been made difficult due to the pandemic, READ II has adapted as best it can to meet project needs using virtual technology.
- Use of the mobile hotline's virtual technology provides a helpful solution to engage teachers, parents, and school directors.
- During a crisis caused by various factors such as COVID-19, the need for strong integration and collaboration among all actors becomes vital. Creating a common and agreed mitigation plan is essential to avoid confusion.

⁵ Through Mobile line messages we are expecting to reach 5,000 teachers, 20,000 Parents, CLL 5,000

⁶ Total reach is counted with a unique caller taking phone numbers as primary key i.e. excluding repeating callers from the count over the period.

I.0 Introduction

This report comprises READ II activities accomplished for the period covering October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020 under each intermediate result.

I.1 Program Description

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education is committed to improving early grade reading outcomes. Building on their successful partnership to improve academic performance and reading achievement, the Government of Ethiopia, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the READ II activity to raise the reading proficiency of 15 million children by 2023. The five-year and nine-month, USAID-funded READ II project is intended to boost the quality of literacy instruction and student support, reaching out to children at risk of failure and dropout caused by cognitive, emotional and the physical effects of hunger, violence, and displacement. READ II supports the Government of Ethiopia's Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) V plan to improve educational quality by providing learning-supportive environments for Grades 1-8 students in MT and English, while the MOE plays a key guiding role. READ II's capacity building activities target the MOE, REBs, zones, woredas and schools. READ II's activities are concentrated in seven target regions – where Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Af Somali, Hadiyyisa, Sidaamu Afoo, Wolayttatto, and Tigrigna languages predominate. To improve students' reading and writing skills, students must be immersed in a reading and writing-supportive environment at school, in the community, and at home. READ II targets its efforts at the school, community, and family level via its focused intermediate results.

I.2 COVID-19 and Rescoping's influence of Project Operations.

The COVID-19 global pandemic, and the prevention and mitigation measures that were instituted by the Government of Ethiopia, Creative Associates and our project partners in response to it, had a dramatic impact on READ II and our beneficiaries over the past year, with a long term implications for the trajectory of the project over its remaining life span. The changes created by the COVID-19 pandemic and rescoping of project program description have been the two major factors that affected project normal operations during the second half of the performance period. The rescoping was done at the request of USAID, due to a shift in funds availability. In the rescoping process, project tasks and activities were prioritized to create i) CORE priority activities and ii) OPTIONAL activities with core activities being fully funded and Optional activities to be funded if additional Mission funding becomes available. As the result of the rescoping, some of the systems strengthening components of the project such as project support to CTEs to strengthen pre-service and in-service teacher education system have been terminated or diluted. Moreover, plans to scale up READ II to wider geographical coverage have been suspended, and support to English has been reduced in the interest of achieving some positive short-term impact on the reading achievement of early grade students by 2023.

2.0 Major Accomplishments by Intermediate Result

Improving learner performance in reading and writing requires systemic changes in how schools are managed and supported. It also requires the creation of incentives and accountability

structures that ensure delivery of quality education. READ II strives to improve student learning outcomes (raising assessment scores in reading and writing) while simultaneously strengthening Ethiopian primary schools and support systems so that learning improvements are sustained beyond the life of the project.

To improve reading skills among early grade learners, READ II takes a whole woreda, whole school, whole teacher, whole child approach which views schools as centers of learning, care and support, and addresses five key elements common to the school effectiveness model: learning, teaching, management, parental/community participation and responsiveness to children's needs.

In the sections that follow, this report highlights the major accomplishments of the project over the last year by intermediate result and sub-results. It also documents challenges encountered and lessons learned.

IR I: Improved Classroom Reading and Writing Instruction

READ II believes that an effective teacher is a crucial ingredient to improve learner performance. Accordingly, project efforts emphasize improving teachers' capacity to implement evidence-based, effective instructional practices in their classrooms. In the first two years, the project team worked closely with the MOE to develop a two-year enhanced professional development model which integrates i) short-term face-to-face training (five-day initial training and a three-day refresher training), ii) school-based mentoring with one-to-one mentor-mentee support, iii) monthly teacher study group reflective meetings and cluster-based experience sharing, and iv) CTE-led professional development. READ II has worked to consolidate project accomplishments in the previous years to create a strong teacher support system.

Major accomplishments in Year 3 include: i) conducting a three-day refresher training for MT teachers who received the initial five-day training in Year 2, ii) training of mentors and rollout of the mentoring program, iii) launching the mobile hotline to provide support to teachers, mentors, and SDs via text messaging, iv) conducting a rapid assessment on English teaching in primary schools to inform training materials development, v) preparation of the primary English facilitator manual and participant packet in readiness for English teacher training, vi) broadcasting of the literacy episodes to support GI-8 students to continue learning through TV and radio during the emergency to reduce learning loss, vii) supporting MOE and REBs in condensing selected GI-8 mother tongue curriculum contents into radio format, viii) conducting close monitoring and providing support to cluster supervisors and school directors and ix) converting the English teacher training materials for GI-8 into video formats.

The following sections provide details on these accomplishments.

IR I.1: Utilization of textbooks, teacher guides, and training materials improved

READ II strongly believes that availability and effective utilization of quality instructional materials by teachers and students is the main education quality factor. In the second quarter of the performance reporting period, READ II conducted a routine monitoring visits to schools to assess fidelity of implementation and gather information on aspects of project interventions. One of the issue to follow during the routine monitoring visits was utilization of textbooks, teachers guides and other instructional materials. Findings indicated that i) many teacher do not carry teachers' guides to their classrooms even if they have them at home, and ii) most students do

not have textbooks in hand. For example, 78% of the teachers interviewed indicate that they have the teacher's guide but many of them do not have them in hand while teaching in the classroom. Similarly, the availability of student textbooks in classrooms is limited - only 36% of students randomly selected from the 58 classrooms observed had textbooks in hand at the time of the visit.

In response to the situation, READ II provided orientation to school directors on the importance of utilization of instructional materials by teachers and students and requested their assistance in monitoring implementation. READ II will continue to monitor the utilization of existing SRMs, textbooks and teachers' guides, which was unfortunately suspended because of COVID-19, in collaboration with cluster supervisors and school directors.

Prepare standardized package addressing hard spots and gaps. In the first half of Year 3, the project customized MT teacher training materials in readiness for refresher training for MT teachers who received the initial five-day training in the previous year. The project also finalized materials for initial training of mentors and conducted a rapid assessment of the new primary English curriculum to inform English training materials. Based on the assessment findings, English teacher training materials were developed. As part of the COVID-19 emergency response, READ II supported student learning at a distance through radio and TV and assisted the MOE and Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) to condense the primary school curriculum into radio and TV format.

IR 1.2: Support system for teachers enhanced.

In Year 3, READ II accomplished three activities foundational to improving mother tongue and English teachers' reading and writing instruction. These included:

Refresher Training for Mother Tongue Teachers. During the first and second quarters of the performance period, READ II provided refresher training to 16,095 (7,504F, 8,591M) teachers. The project conducted a three-day refresher training for the trainers who participated in the initial teachers training. Subsequently, Grade 1-4 and 5-8 MT teachers received a three-day refresher training. The training gave teachers an opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges they encountered in the implementation of the previously introduced instructional techniques. The training of trainers (ToT) training was facilitated by 23 master trainers, while the actual teacher training was facilitated by 556 trainers (53 in Addis Ababa, 119 in Amhara, 162 in Oromia, 80 in Tigray, 117 in SNNPR, and 4 in Somali).



MT language teachers' refresher training, Tigray

The mother tongue teachers' refresher training was informed by a field study which was conducted at the end of Year 2 with the aim of assessing teachers' teaching practices after receiving the training for Grades 1-4 and Grades 5-8 MT teachers provided by READ II. The refresher training materials and methodology were designed to address the gaps identified by the field study. MT teachers were given the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their experiences implementing the skills and knowledge gained from the training provided by READ II and share challenges encountered and lessons learned. Moreover, the training was planned in such a way that it provided trainees with a hands-on experience. Many teachers appreciated this, saying that it helped them to strengthen their knowledge and skills on reading and writing pedagogy.

The refresher training covered key topics such as the influence of the initial training in the classroom, continuous assessment, the value of integrated literacy, literacy elements and strategies, review and practice, lesson planning for active learning, universal design for learning, national examination preparation, inclusive classroom environment, gender responsive pedagogy, resource development, and an overview of mentoring. The training helped to acquaint teachers with theoretical and practical skills and knowledge in providing effective, differentiated, and gender-equitable mother tongue instruction. The MOE, REB, ZEDs and WEOs played a key role in all the training processes.

Table 2: # of MT teachers who received refresher training.

Region	Language	Grade 1-4			Grade 5-8			Plan Grade 1-8	Grade 1-8			%
		F	M	Total	F	M	Total		F	M	Total	
Addis Ababa	Amharic & Afaan Oromoo	543	142	685	329	148	477	1608	872	290	1162	72%
Amhara	Amharic & Afaan Oromoo	2254	1815	4069	488	802	1290	6291	2742	2617	5359	85%
Oromia	Afaan Oromoo	1508	1177	2685	554	1196	1750	5100	2062	2373	4435	87%
Tigray	Tigrigna	792	556	1348	109	238	347	2309	901	794	1695	73%
Somali	Af-soomaali	34	293	327	19	135	154	536	53	428	481	90%
SIDAMA	Sidaamu Afoo	187	542	729	79	315	394	1349	266	857	1123	83%
SNNP	Hadiyyisa	205	226	431	100	271	371	1168	305	497	802	69%
	Wolayttatto	203	359	562	100	376	476	1038	303	735	1038	100%
Total		5726	5110	10,836	1,778	3,481	5,259	19,399	7504	8591	16,095	83% ⁷

Mentoring Training for Mother Tongue Teachers. In Year 3, READ II rolled out a mother tongue mentoring program to provide ongoing professional support to teachers. In Year 3, a total of 6,106 (2,718 F, 3,388 M) mother tongue teachers who also received initial and refresher training were trained as mentors to lead the school-based mother tongue teachers professional development practice. The mentoring training was led by a total of 246 trainers.

The five-day mentoring training mainly focused on supporting trainees to understand the structure, process, and value of mentoring, developing mentoring skills and strategies, and

⁷ The variation is a result of teacher mobility. Teachers who received the initial 5-day training left their schools (Woredas) and did not attend the refresher training.

practicing individual and group mentoring as well as cluster level experience sharing processes. Trainees were provided with the mentoring manual which they can use as a guideline to lead the mentoring program in schools. In addition, both G1-4 and G5-8 teachers were provided with a separate activity book called Quick Tools to use as a guiding document while conducting the monthly teacher study group. A guideline was developed and shared with cluster supervisors to help them in planning and conducting the cluster-based experience sharing sessions which take place once a semester.

Table 3: # of MT Mentor trainees disaggregated by region and gender.

Region	Language	Mentoring G1-4			Mentoring G5-8			Mentoring G1-8			Annual Plan & actual in %	
		F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	Total	%
Addis Ababa	Amharic & Afaan Oromoo	257	62	319	120	60	180	377	122	499	545	92
Amhara	Amharic & Afaan Oromoo	573	426	999	312	383	695	885	809	1694	1832	92
Oromia	Afaan Oromoo	516	539	1055	310	596	906	826	1135	1961	1980	99
Tigray	Tigrigna	275	253	528	57	118	175	332	371	703	770	95
Somali	Af-soomaali	13	104	117	11	55	66	24	159	183	192	95
SIDAMA	Sidaamu Afoo	62	202	264	31	169	200	93	371	464	560	83 ⁸
SNNP	Hadiyyisa	70	69	139	32	93	125	102	162	264	296	89
	Wolayttatto	47	129	176	32	130	162	79	259	338	360	94
Total		1813	1784	3597	905	1604	2509	2718	3388	6106	6,408	93

English Teachers Training. In Year 3, READ II planned to introduce a 2-year professional development program for Grade 1-8 English teachers, beginning with initial training and followed by mentoring support. To this effect, READ II conducted a rapid assessment which incorporated a desk review and field visit. Based on the findings, READ II developed refresher training materials that address the key gaps identified in the assessment. To cascade the training, READ II trained 35 master trainers and 464 trainers (75F, 389M) who in turn provided training to the actual teachers. A total of 4,593 (1,941F, 2,652M) Grade 1-8 English teachers (3642 from G1-4 and 951 from G5-8) from three regions (Addis Ababa, Sidama, SNNPR, and Tigray) received the initial five-day training.

The training was interrupted by COVID-19, and the project was unable to complete the training in Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions. READ II is now working with the MOE to adapt the English training materials prepared for face-to-face training into video format so that the Ministry can scale up the training in a cost-effective manner in the years to come.

⁸ Target was set based on a minimum of two mentors per school. However, some schools with only one or two teachers were not represented in the actual training. Hence, variolation in Sidama and Hadiyya. did not qualify to or less Mentors who were expected to attend.

IR 1.3: Access to supplementary reading and writing materials improved.

Supplying an adequate quantity of SRMs to reading camps and schools has been a major concern of READ II. During the second quarter, a special effort was made to ensure that the stock of SRMs whose distribution had been delayed at the regional or woreda level in Oromia was taken to schools and newly established reading camps. Production and distribution of SRMs to schools in Oromia was delayed because the region took long to validate and approved the SRMs developed by a former USAID-funded project. As a result, 997,000 copies of 76 titles of Afaan Oromo SRMs were distributed to the reading camps in Oromia, and 38,400 copies of 30 titles of level-3 Amharic SRMs for Addis Ababa region were reprinted and distributed to reading camps.

High quality English books were also donated by project partner Book for Africa. The books were assessed and validated by the MOE and REBs before they were delivered to schools. Most of the validated titles were suitable for students in G5-8.

In the reporting period, the books selected and validated by the MOE and REBs were distributed to schools in Addis Ababa, Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions. During the second half of the reporting period, distribution to schools was complicated by COVID-19 restrictions – thus books were only recently delivered to the woreda level. Distribution to schools will be possible during school reopening.

As part of the project rescoping progress, READ II has closed out its Purchase Order Agreement (POA) with Books for Africa, so further distribution of English-language SRMs under the project is not expected.

Strengthening Book Supply Chain Management. Strengthening the book supply chain management system was one of the major objectives of READ II. Support in this area was provided by READ II niche partner, the blueTree Group (bTG). During Year 3, bTG did an exercise on tracking and tracing textbooks all the way from the printer to the school, using smartphone apps and other ICT solutions. The alpha test revealed that smartphones cannot be used to track books all the way to the school level, and so an adaptation was made to the system to rely on SMS for tracking to the school level. The beta test used this approach to track books to 200 schools and was highly successful.

Part of bTG's mandate was to build the capacity of the Ethiopian printing and publishing industries, which are organized into the Ethiopian Printers and Publishers Association (EPPA). READ II offered EPPA members training on such as planning for organizational improvement plan, preparation of winning bid documents, networking, partnering with international printing firms, and policy negotiations with the Government, for example, on reducing import taxes on paper. READ II has also advised individual printers and publishers on how to modernize various aspects of their production processes and supported an EPPA working group to research and prepare to lobby the Government of Ethiopia regarding the removal of the import tax on paper, which is a barrier to local printers offering competitive prices for book procurement.

During the COVID-19 shutdown period, READ II developed three training modules on the book supply chain for REBs and local printers. Alternative training modalities such as the Telegram smartphone app were also explored. The REB training modules are part of bTG's technical support to the MOE in the process of decentralizing the printing and distribution of books. The

modules were designed to address the training needs identified through a phone survey with REB officials. However, the training has not been conducted as the agreement with bTG has been terminated as part of the rescoping process. This activity has now been planned as optional activity for consideration if additional funds are made available during the remaining period of the project.

Following the closure of schools on March 23, 2020, READ II pivoted to use tv and radio and adopt distance learning in response to the changes created by COVID-19. With guidance by the client, reprogramming plan was developed and funds were redirected to cover the implementation of activities in the reprogramming plan. In the section that follows, progress towards the implementation of activities related to IRI which were planned as part of reprogramming plan for COVID-19 response and major accomplishments are highlighted.

Support students to continue learning while schools are closed to reduce learning loss. Following the global pandemic, schools were closed. Students and teachers were forced to stay at home. In response, READ II developed a COVID-19 Mitigation and Reprogramming Plan which aimed at addressing new issues and responding to new needs in the education system during the pandemic. To keep students learning while they are at home, READ II contracted Whiz Kids Workshop (WKW) to broadcast and adapt their existing “Tsehay Loves Learning (TLL)” mother tongue literacy programs for TV and radio. The TLL episodes include eight literacy lessons developed under the READ TA project and 32 other children’s literacy episodes developed by WKW for GI-8 students. In total, READ II supported WKW to broadcast 40 literacy lessons in each of the seven MT languages.



Children watching the TLL TV program and listening to the TLL radio program broadcasted by READ II, Sidama

Broadcasting of the eight TV literacy lessons developed in all seven MT languages under READ TA launched immediately after agreement. However, the radio adaptation of the eight READ TA episodes took some time. WKW worked with READ II and the REBs to adapt them to radio format and make them ready for transmission. As a result, they were adapted to radio format, validated by the REBs, recorded, and broadcasted in all the target languages on regional radio channels. As of the end of Year 3, all regions had finished broadcasting the eight READ TA literacy lessons and started broadcasting the additional 32 children’s literacy episodes.

The 32 children’s literacy episodes which were initially developed in Amharic by WKW were also adapted to the other six target MTs and validated by the respective regional authorities. Voice actors required for recording the dialogue were selected based on competence and related

work experience. They were provided with training, and the script recording process was completed in all regions. The audio and the video recordings of the 32 TLL literacy lessons are now being broadcasted.

READ II tracked the radio and TV broadcasts to confirm that the programs were airing at the right date and time and to check quality. WKW provided orientation to READ II regional staff to familiarize them with the Automated Broadcast Monitoring System (ABMS) used to monitor the broadcasts.

Support REBs to prepare grade-level radio programs in MT and English. As part of the COVID-19 response plan, READ II provided financial and technical support to target regions to condense previously developed G1-4 and/or G 5-8 MT lessons and turn them into radio programs. Five REBs received this assistance – Oromia, Addis Ababa, Somali, Amhara and Tigray.

Table 4 below summarizes the number of MT lessons supported by READ II in each of the target regions and their broadcast status.

Table 4: Summary of # video and radio lessons produced.

No	Region	Language	G1-4		G5-8		Remark
			# of lessons per grade	Total # of lessons produced	# of lessons per grade	Total # of lessons produced	
1	Tigray	Tigrigna	8	32	8	32	Production completed for all 64 lessons. and broadcasting started
2	Amhara	Amharic	14	56	-		Recordings completed and ready for broadcast.
3	Somali	Af Somali	20	80	20	80	Production completed for all 160 radio lessons. and broadcasting started
4	Oromia	Afaan Oromo	15	60	-	-	Broadcasting underway.
5	Addis Ababa	Amharic			-	20	Second semester contents of Afaan Oromo and Amharic lessons condensed and posted on AACEB Telegram channel for students to access. More than 120,000 visitors subscribed.
		Afaan Oromo			-	50	
Total						390	

In addition, READ II agreed to support the MOE in the preparation of a G1-7 English radio program. However, this process has not yet started as the MOE is not yet ready to proceed.

Provide ongoing support to teachers. READ II used two virtual methods to support teachers during COVID-19: teacher training audio and video script preparation and IVR hotline support. The project finished preparing teacher training video scripts for G1-4 and G5-8 English teachers. The recording process is underway, and the videos will be distributed to schools through flash drives or CDs. Under IVR hotline support, the project pushed out messages to over 17,000 teachers to encourage them to participate in making use of the IVR. As a result, 4,166 subscribers used the IVR.

Create videos for training of Primary English Teachers. Following the national rollout of the revised English curriculum materials, the MOE requested USAID/READ II to support cost-effective mechanisms to provide orientation to English teachers nationwide. In response, USAID/READ II agreed to provide technical and financial support to MOE to adapt the English teacher training materials into video format. Since the original READ II English training materials were prepared with face-to-face training in mind, they need to be customized to audio and video format to respond to the Ministry's needs. At the time of this report, eight video scripts of 30-40-minute English training sessions for G1-4 and seven video scripts of 30-40-minute English training sessions for G5-8 have been validated and finalized in readiness for recording. Presenters have been identified to start the recording early next quarter.

IR 2: Strengthened community engagement in educational activities.

Community, youth, and parental engagement is central to improving and sustaining education and reading outcomes. Likewise, community members play a vital role in removing barriers to quality education, mobilizing resources, and increasing school accountability. The READ II community outreach intervention is designed to enhance parental engagement in children's learning and increase children's access to and engagement with learning materials.

IR 2.1: Parent, youth, and school collaboration increased.

Some of the implementation areas under IR2.1 include two sections of reporting covering this past project year. The first section discusses pre-COVID-19 implementation during roughly the first two quarters of the year. The second section discusses implementation during COVID-19 for the remaining two quarters.

Technical Support Provided to Local Implementing Partners. A leading responsibility of the READ II project's IR2 component is providing technical support to Local Implementing Partners (LIPs). One of the main ways that LIPs then carry out the project's activities at the village level is by recruiting and sustaining volunteer Community Literacy Leaders (CLLs) through savings groups. This year, the project trained a total of 61 LIPs staff for two days on Village Level Savings Associations for Youth (VSAY). VSAY is a mechanism whereby CLLs can form associations to save money, generate interest and obtain loans.

After the VSAY orientation, READ II held a two-day review meeting and exposure visit in January 2020 with LIPs in each of the project's five target regions and Addis Ababa. A total of 276 participants from REBs, ZEOs, WEOs, and LIPs attended the meetings with the purpose of assessing LIPs' community outreach implementation progress and discussing challenges to help partners learn from each other. In addition to the review meetings, the project staff conducted joint supportive supervision visits to 25 Reading Camps and 42 schools supported by LIPs. Project staff provided on-site feedback to LIP staff, woreda experts, and volunteer CLLs during these visits and later presented their findings at the regional review and reflection workshop. The joint supportive supervision visits helped to support some LIPs which were struggling to establish functional reading camps and connect with their local schools. LIP staff attending this workshop included regional Program Coordinators, MEL Officers, and Finance Managers.

Project staff also built the capacity of LIPs to document and report data from their reading camps and schools to the READ II central data system using SurveyCTO software. Additionally, the

project trained a total of 17 LIP Regional Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and program staff on the overall READ II MEL framework, data collection tools, and USAID marking and branding requirements in a four-day workshop held in Addis Ababa. Later, the same training was cascaded to 53 LIP woreda-based Community Outreach Officers (COOs) and 97 government experts and project staff from the woredas where the project carries out direct implementation. Following these trainings, LIPs have been documenting, sharing, and reporting quality data in their monthly and quarterly reports. A total of 68,524 data reports have been uploaded into SurveyCTO.

LIP Implementation under COVID-19. In the second half of the year, COVID-19 changed how the project provides technical support to LIPs. READ II shared the COVID-19 Mitigation and Reprogramming Plan with LIPs and held a one-day orientation with them via Zoom to enable them to continue implementing their core activities amid rapidly changing circumstances. LIPs' key COVID-19 response activities have included: 1) promoting the mobile hotline to parents and volunteer CLLs, 2) attending the virtual refresher training on community outreach methodologies, 3) contributing to the revision of IR2 materials including the Reading Camp Toolkit, Reading and Writing Club Guidelines, and TLM Toolkit, and 4) uploading data through SurveyCTO.

Project staff provided a refresher training on community outreach methodologies to 80 LIP staff via Zoom. The training took place in two phases, from June 20-24 and again from June 25-29. Session content included four community outreach training modules: Reading Camp Toolkit, Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs), Village Level Saving Association for Youth (VSAY), and Community Mobilization & Resource Mapping. This training has also helped the LIPs to implement some of the COVID-19 response activities such as mobile hotline services.

In addition to the training sessions mentioned earlier, READ II conducted a quarterly implementation review meeting of the COVID-19 response plan with all LIP staff on August 21st & 22nd via Zoom.

Establish Learning Hubs. Learning hubs are designed to practically showcase READ II community outreach activities to LIPs and stakeholders at the grassroots level. There are three essential elements that comprise a fully functioning learning hub: 1) a model school implementing all the school-based activities, 2) a reading camp, and 3) a household with a reading corner in the home. In the first half of this year, the project established 32 learning hubs across the eight direct implementation woredas, including 32 schools and 128 associated reading camps. READ II also furnished those reading camps with 1,920 slates, 384 floor mats, manila paper packets, flipcharts, pairs of scissors, marker packets, and 384 packs of pencils.

Community-Level Activities. Communities are one of three environments where READ II's community outreach intervention reaches beneficiaries. Community members play a vital role in removing barriers to quality education and mobilizing resources. This year, progress in communities included celebration of International Volunteers Day, increased community engagement through local partners, establishment of youth savings groups, and community level reading and storytelling events.

READ II has engaged 11,656 CLLs to support children to learn to read in 5,968 Reading Camps. To celebrate and motivate this large volunteer workforce, the project commemorated 2019

International Volunteer Day at both the regional and national levels. The celebration motto was “Volunteer for an Inclusive Future” and was attended by CLLs, the MOE, USAID, READ II staff, and renowned Ethiopian writers and other artists. For their contributions to the project, volunteer CLLs were given certificates and backpacks containing thank you cards and branded notepads.

Table 5: Pre-COVID # of Functional Reading Camps by implementing partner										
READ II (Direct)	ADA	EDA	CVDA	HUNDEE	ODA	OWDA	Pro-Pride Amhara	Pro pride A.A	TDA	Total
700	721	570	540	940	938	192	915	80	372	5,968

Most community-level implementation is carried out by LIPs. As a result, READ II expends great effort to ensure LIPs have excellent capacity to fully rollout project methodologies at the woreda level. This year, LIPs and direct implementation field staff conducted intensive community mobilization sessions with WEOs, SDs, kebele leaders, and community members to secure reading camp sites, recruit, and train volunteer CLLs, and distribute SRMs. As a result of these efforts, the project established 5,968 functional reading camps in the first part of this year. READ II recruited and trained a total of 11,656 volunteer CLLs to lead these camps.

Table 6: # CLLs trained on Reading Camp and child protection by implementing partner										
READ II (Direct)	ADA	EDA	CVDA	HUNDEE	ODA	OWDA	Pro-Pride Amhara	Pro pride A. A.	TDA	Total
1373	1426	1140	1083	1868	1751	384	1472	240	919	11656

CLLs received training on the Reading Camp Toolkit and child protection content, and 7,558 of them were also trained on TLMs use.

Table 7: CLLs trained on TLM (LIPs only)							
ADA	EDA	CVDA	HUNDEE	ODA	OWDA	Pro-Pride Amhara	Total
1177	1109	1074	1930	1884	384	252	7,558

Volunteer motivation is a key part of successfully implementing community engagement activities and is also an important way that the READ II project supports youth that serve as CLLs. Following a November VSAY training in woredas where the project implements directly, 1,357 trained CLLs have now formed 118 savings groups and created bank accounts with a collective total of ETB 229,640 in savings. Additionally, LIPs and local government partners are also helping CLLs to obtain formal employment, including a total of 23 (14 female) CLLs in direct implementation Woredas and 335 (205 female) CLLs in the Amhara region.

Community Implementation under COVID-19. COVID-19 has presented challenges for READ II to maintain its substantial roster of volunteer CLLs. Two such leading challenges are 1) volunteers relocating and 2) loss of motivation to resume their volunteer roles. To keep volunteers engaged and equipped, the project developed hotline messaging specifically for them.

Messages are designed to engage them about the skills they have learned from the project and to also motivate them to continue aspects of their volunteerism as best they can under the circumstances. To this end, community outreach coordinators/officers have reached out to CLLs via phone and text messages to introduce them to hotline services. Field staff have also reached out to volunteer CLLs by phone to motivate and engage them during the COVID-19 period to resume their services post-pandemic. A total of 12,082 volunteer CLLs received phone calls and text messages from READ II and LIP field staff during the last three months. Out of these, a total of 10,772 volunteer CLLs directly called into the hotline number which then provided them guidance on how to remotely support parents with learning strategies while their children are at home.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided project staff the opportunity to revise and simplify the manuals used for activity implementation to make them more user-friendly. US-based colleagues, with support from the Ethiopia-based team, revised the Reading Camp Toolkit, Learning Hub Operational Guidance, and Community Outreach Framework. READ II staff based in Ethiopia revised the following materials: The Reading and Writing Club Guidelines, Community Mobilization and Resource Mapping Guide, and Read-a-thon, Reading Buddies, and Community Storytelling Guide. During the reporting period, project staff also drafted Reading Camp re-opening guidelines and shared them with field staff to support discussions with REBs and WEOs.

School-Based Activities. In the first half of the year, READ II supported school-based reading through training teachers to create teaching and learning materials (TLMs) from locally available resources, establishing reading and writing clubs, and linking schools to reading camps. In 175 schools where READ II implements directly, the project trained 350 deputy SDs and MT teachers for two days on managing reading and writing clubs and reading park activities at their schools. These reading and writing clubs involve competitions to motivate students and encourage better-performing children to support struggling ones (reading buddies).

The project also provided refresher trainings on TLMs to 105 woreda level trainers. Trainers in direct implementation woredas then trained 482 schoolteachers and monitored school-based activities on a quarterly basis. Trainers from LIP-implemented woredas conducted similar trainings for 3,725 (1,090 female) SDs and MT teachers for two days. As a result of this training, the READ II project achieved the following major outputs as indicated in Table 8.

Table 8: Major Achievements of TLM Training in Schools	
1	1,642 print-rich classrooms created: 942 by LIPs; 700 by READ II
2	2,038 Reading and Writing clubs established: 1,863 by LIPs; 175 by READ II
3	823 school-based reading parks established: 648 by LIPs; 175 by READ II
4	36,073 new reading buddies formed across LIPs and direct implementation woredas

Home-based Reading Activities. READ II outreach to parents seeks to boost parents' and caregivers' engagement to contribute to their children's literacy development and academic performance and to create synergy between teachers' and parents' efforts to support children's literacy acquisition.

In the first half of this year, READ II trained a total of 350 SDs and kebele chairpersons on the Parental Awareness Workshop (PAW) methodology in direct implementation woredas. These

sessions equip parents to engage their children in activities to promote reading and promote linkages between schools and parents. Following the training, these SDs and chairpersons cascaded monthly PAW sessions to parents and caregivers. READ II later provided a Phase II refresher training on the Awareness Workshops (PAW) to a total of 105 woreda-level trainers in direct implementation sites and cascaded the remaining PAW sessions to 356 (23 F) school principals and kebele chairpersons. This PAW Phase II training included sessions equipping parents to engage their children in activities to promote reading and promote linkages with schools. A total of 38,859 parents completed seven monthly PAW sessions.

Following these sessions, parents created 1,992 reading corners in their homes. Reading corners are spaces where parents/caregivers support children in their reading, education, and homework. LIPs worked through their woreda-level trainers to train a total of 3,094 (157 female) schoolteachers and KA chairpersons, but most LIPs were unable to cascade the PAW sessions to parents and caregivers due to COVID-19.

Home-based Activities under COVID-19. READ II staff worked in collaboration with partner organization VIAMO to develop mobile hotline content, including key messages to parents. The hotline technology was piloted in Amharic in two regions with promising utilization rates from these target audiences. The content/key messages were then translated into the other six target MT languages in which the project operates. This initiative helped parents to support their children to read at home which is particularly crucial during the current school closure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. READ II and LIP staff promoted the mobile hotline service in two ways. First, they reached a total of 59,719 parents through monthly phone calls and text messages. Second, LIPs posted 49,515 placards about the mobile hotline in public areas where the project is implemented. As a result of these efforts, a total of 26,886 parents placed calls to the mobile hotline number and potentially assisted their children to learn at home while schools are closed.

IR 3: Improved leadership, management, and delivery capacity at each administrative level

READ II strives to establish a strong instructional leadership system that supports improvement of students' performance in reading and writing. The literature is clear that evidence-based instructional leadership is critical to improve learner performance. READ II is set to equip school directors, cluster supervisors and woreda education officers with the tools and skills they need to “diagnose” weaknesses in the teaching and learning of reading and writing, and to work with teachers to develop and implement “treatments” that will lead to learners' improved performance. Details of accomplishments in this area during Year 3 are presented in the sections that follow.

IR3 comprises four major areas of implementation: 1) providing training on School Instructional Leadership (SIL), 2) regular monitoring, evaluation, and assessments including biannual joint monitoring and reflective meetings, 3) provision of training on Change Management for Education Leaders, and 4) support to REBs and woredas to plan and implement COVID-19 response actions.

School Instructional Leadership (SIL) in literacy (reading & writing). As part of creating an enabling environment for school-based literacy activities, READ II provided SIL

training to school directors, vice directors and cluster supervisors. The SIL training aimed at introducing the need for school leaders to provide meaningful support to mother tongue reading and writing teachers. The training introduced the school leaders to practical mechanisms to mainstream reading and writing.



School Instructional Leadership (SIL) Training, Somali

Key thematic areas covered in the training were: why literacy, why early? G1- 4 and G5-8 literacy instructional approach, support to teacher mentoring activities at the school and cluster levels, effective instructional leadership, engaging families and communities, creating an enabling school environment addressing gender, establishing a shared school vision for change, and creating and using an instructional improvement plan.

Table 9: # of education managers trained in school instructional leadership by Region.

Region	Language	Total Participants			School Directors ⁹			Vice School Directors ¹⁰			Cluster Supervisors		
		F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Addis Ababa	Amharic	37	102	139	0	0	0	30	88	118	11	10	21
	Afaan Oromoo	4	14	18	0	0	0	1	7	8	1	9	10
Amhara	Amharic	117	721	838	19	248	267	98	423	521	0	50	50
	Afaan Oromoo	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	0
Oromia*	Afaan Oromoo	108	1081	1189	97	912	1009	0	0	0 ¹¹	11	169	180
Tigray	Tigrigna	59	96	155	0	0	0	59	96	155	0	0	0
Sidama	Sidaamu Afoo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somali	Af-soomaali	8	92	100	0	0	0	8	92	100	0	0	0
SNNP	Hadiyyisa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Wolayttatto	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		338	2106	2444	116	1160	1276	201	706	907	23	238	261

⁹ Please note that SDs in Addis Ababa, SNNP, Sidama, Somali and Tigray regions received the SIL training in the second year of the project and hence, no number is shown here.

¹⁰ Vice school directors in Sidama and SNNP regions received SIL training in Year 2.

¹¹ The training of deputy school directors in Oromia was suspended due to state emergency school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the end of the training, participants created draft school instructional plans which included plans for promoting female leadership, gender equality and gender sensitive pedagogy, and creating a gender-equitable school environment.

The school leaders affirmed that they received key knowledge and skills on instructional leadership during the training and they expressed readiness to support the MT teachers, facilitate mentoring activities as part of teacher professional development, and link schools with reading camps.

As Table 9 shows, the percentage of female school leaders and cluster supervisors in READ II implementation schools is very low (about 14%). The highest percentage of female leaders is 26% in Addis Ababa, and the lowest is about 8% in Somali Region. READ II recognizes this gap and make an effort to include senior female teachers in leadership trainings to encourage them to move leadership position. The issue will also be part of review and reflection meetings with senior READ, ZED and WEOs officials.

Regular monitoring, evaluation, and assessments. One of the strategies READ II employs to increase fidelity of implementation is to conduct joint performance monitoring with government counterparts and review and reflect on the information gathered during the monitoring visits. Five regions (Sidama, SNNP, Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and Somali) conducted joint monitoring with the respective REB, ZEDs, and WEO Institutional Capacity Building Teams (ICBTs) in sample WEOs, schools and reading camps. Joint supportive monitoring was disrupted in Addis Ababa because schools and reading camps were closed in March due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The joint supportive monitoring was designed to monitor target schools' implementation in light of project expectations and to provide feedback to MT teachers, SDs, CSs, WEO experts, and CLLs on areas for improvement. It was also designed to identify what went well in implementation and what key challenges have been faced. Moreover, the supportive supervision exercise gathered important information about project performance – both best practices and areas which need further support. The joint monitoring exercise was also used to encourage cooperation and strong collaboration among different stakeholders (schools, WEOs, ZEDS, and REBs). Data was collected throughout the supportive monitoring exercise using eight data collection tools, including classroom observation, school director interviews, MT teacher interviews, cluster supervisor interviews, WEO interviews, student assessments, reading camp visits, and volunteer interviews. In addition, at the end of the supportive monitoring, WEOs were also visited. After the school and reading camp visits, feedback was given to school leaders, mentors and MT teachers, and a debriefing was held with woreda-level ICBTs including WEO heads. In the debrief meetings, key issues that need to be addressed through remedial actions were discussed.

Findings from the Joint Monitoring Visits

Although there are some variations from region to region, the following are major common findings and observations from the joint monitoring visits.



Head of Oromia Region Education Bureau Dr. Tola visited Reading Camps and schools supported by READ II Waliso, Oromia

During the routine monitoring visits, some encouraging signs of improvements were observed as indicated below.

- Many children are attending reading camps.
- MT teachers were observed assisting the volunteer CLL in some Reading Camps.
- All visited Reading Camps have received SRMs.
- Books for Africa-donated SRMs in English were available in all the visited schools.
- The mentoring program has kicked off in some schools, while some other schools have yet to start the implementation. In schools where the mentoring program has started, the MT teachers confirm that they are benefiting from the program.
- Participation of local communities in the establishment of reading camps was found to be high and notable.
- The woreda-level READ II ICBTs have a good understanding of the READ II project activities and are displaying strong coordination and teamwork.
- In a few schools there were improvements in teaching methodology observed, which could be the result of the trainings provided by READ II.

However, there were areas of improvement identified that as well will require follow up and additional support. For example, while the mentoring program has started in some schools, additional support and follow-up is needed to strengthen and institutionalize the program. Utilization of textbooks and teachers' guide is weak. Even though teachers claim to have textbooks and teachers guides at home, most of them do not bring them to their classroom to refer to. Similarly, many of the students were found to be without textbooks in the observed classes.

Following the routine monitoring exercise, the project identified follow-up actions and developed a plan for follow-up action during the second part of the reporting period. However, implementation of this plan was interrupted by COVID-19. The plan has now been integrated into the project year four annual work plan and will be considered seriously.

Joint Review Meeting. The joint review and reflective meetings were planned for two purposes: i) to increase government participation in and ownership over the project, and ii) to gather firsthand information on project implementation and impact to inform review meetings. READ II and government joint monitoring visits were conducted in two regions before COVID-19 (Amhara, Sidama and SNNP). The joint review and reflective meetings provided important lessons. At the end of the review and reflective meetings, regional and woreda education officers agreed that it is their responsibility to monitor and ensure fidelity of implementation of READ II, not project staff alone. They also recognized the importance of focusing on results as opposed to inputs and acknowledged that the gaps identified by the joint monitoring were the result of weak follow-up by cluster supervisors, directors and woreda education officers. By the end of the meetings, the group had established a common understanding on the way forward:

- School directors and cluster supervisors will take responsibility on follow-up actions and be accountable for the outcome of government and project efforts. This includes conducting classroom observations and providing feedback to teachers, making resources available for teachers, conducting periodic learning assessments to track learner performance, etc.
- School directors and cluster supervisors will take responsibility to support implementation of and institutionalize the mentoring program.
- Ensure link between schools with reading camps.
- Improve documentation of school level activities for reference and verification.
- School directors and cluster supervisors will regularly follow up on activities both in the schools and reading camps and provide feedback on what goes well and what does not.
- WEOs should seek and receive feedback from CSs and SDs regularly and provide support as required.
- WEOs should reduce the engagement of CSs in routine administrative matters and encourage their increased professional support to school directors and teachers.

Change Leadership Training for Education Leaders (REBs, ZEDs and WEOs). As part



Change Management Training in session

of building the leadership capacity of region, zone and woreda education officers, READ II initiated a short training on the basic concepts and practices of change leadership/management in Amhara, Sidama and SNNP regions in February and early March 2020. These trainings were combined with the joint review meetings held in Amhara, Sidama and SNNP regions.

ICBTs from the region to woreda level received a full-day intensive training on

change leadership. Following the training, the ICBTs from each level outlined pertinent gaps in different areas of educational leadership and produced action plans to improve support to efforts to improve the reading and writing of schoolchildren. The action plans prepared were compiled at the to follow up on the implementation of the action plan. Unfortunately, implementation of the plans was disrupted by COVID-19. The other four target regions including Addis Ababa, Tigray, Oromia, and Somali were scheduled to receive the training as well, but the training was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 10: Amhara, Sidama and SNNP Joint Review meeting and Change Leadership training participants

Participant	Amhara		SIDAMA		SNNP		Total		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	Total
WEO	5	53	8	42	14	42	27	137	164
ZED	1	30	3	3	2	11	6	44	50
RESB	3	8	1	2	0	0	4	10	14
LIP	0	2	0	7	1	6	1	15	16
Total	9	93	12	54	17	59	38	206	244

Support REBs and woredas to plan and implement COVID-19 response actions. After the declaration of the State of Emergency by the Government of Ethiopia, the MOE developed a ‘Concept Note for Education Sector COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan’ on April 3, 2020. Following this, the MOE organized taskforces to create ‘School Reopening Guidelines’ in alignment with this concept note. The MOE requested education partners (local and international NGOs and donors) to provide technical support and to participate directly in the development of four complementary sets of guidelines on Safe School Environment, Psychosocial/Social Emotional, Teachers and Education Leaders, and Communication. In response to the request, READ II technical staff actively participated in the development of guidelines for Teachers and Education Leaders and PSS/SEL and assisted in the production of the final consolidated School Reopening Guideline. The Guideline has been circulated to all REBs, ZEDs, WEOs and schools.

Systems for early grade reading and writing increased. Completion of simplified Institutional Capacity Assessment (sICA) data collection to inform development of Institutional Strengthening Plans (ISPs). The READ II pre-Service component, as part of its goal of strengthening MT departments in 32 CTEs, administered the streamlined ICA in Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Tigray, Sidama and SNNP CTEs to gain additional information to support colleges in “filling the gaps” in the preparation of would-be MT teachers. The focus of the Year 3 pre-service work has been to support CTEs to self-assess their capacity using the streamlined ICA tool, identify strengths and gaps, and inform the development of CTE-led institutional strengthening plans (ISPs).

In Year 3, READ II came up with the streamlined ICA (sICA) tool informed by the feedback obtained from review of the ICA tools in Year 2. READ II delivered refresher data collection training for selected data collectors from satellite CTEs during Oct 15-17, 2019, with the objective of equipping data collectors with skills in basic data collection, research ethics, and data flow procedures. A total of 39 (6F) college instructors attended the refresher training to collect data from their respective CTEs.

Second-tier data collection began in December 2019. From December to the end of February 2020, data was collected from 14 CTEs (5 from Amhara, 6 from Oromia, 2 from Somali, and 1 from Tigray). Subsequently, the data was entered at the regional level and communicated to EDC Home Office for analysis. Data was not collected from the remaining 12 CTEs due to the onset of the pandemic causing the closure of colleges.

In the third quarter of the year, the collected data was analyzed and shared. Below is a summary of the CTEs' strengths and areas for improvement within eight dimensions:

Table 11: Summary of CTE's strength and areas of improvements

Dimension assessed	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
CTE Organization and Structure	CTEs have clearly indicated and explicit responsibilities and structure, clear and transparent elections of deans and other positions.	Inadequate foundational skills among those entering CTEs. lack of effective communication and support from REBs.
CTE Resources and Facilities	Good access to libraries with adequate hours; well-equipped classrooms.	Poor access to internet and computer labs. In some areas, poor access to MT Guides.
CTE Research and Innovation	A few CTEs allow opportunities for research among instructors.	Most CTEs do not have good opportunities for research.
CTE Support for MT Instructors	CTEs in Somali region indicated there are positive professional development opportunities.	All CTEs except those in Somali region indicated that there is too little professional development or cross-disciplinary dialogue. MT instructors expressed not feeling supported by CTEs.
CTE Support for Students	Male and female students are considered equal.	Safety for female students was a concern in all CTEs. Students have limited involvement in decision-making at the CTE.
CTE MT Curriculum	READ TA modules are being used in all CTEs, except in Oromia region.	Instructors and students are not certain the CTE MT curriculum is in alignment with the primary school MT curriculum. Some portions of curriculum are too long, bulky and unclear.
Quality of MT Instruction	MT Instructors generally use a learner-centered approach.	MT Instructors are not always available to provide extra support. Most MT Instructors do not have a strong grasp of English.
CTE Practicum and Support	All CTEs have assigned Practicum Coordinators and have written practicum guidelines.	Practicum Supervisors are not always available to provide regular support. Some practicum guidelines need to be more practical, as they are too theoretical.

The findings of the streamlined ICA were disseminated virtually. The READ II pre-service and MEL coordinators communicated the sICA results to the CTEs. Following that, colleges were provided with individual CTE briefers and key takeaways, which outlined suggested actions to aid CTEs in developing their individualized Institutional Strengthening Plans (ISPs). Support was provided for CTEs in the development of their ISPs and in the final quarter, ISPs were collected from CTEs to share with and receive implementation support from REBs. Due to the commonality of results among the 14 CTEs, it was possible to present the generalized results to the remaining 12 CTEs.

As developed in the COVID-19 Mitigation Plan, READ II established a virtual Knowledge Exchange Group (KEG) with MT Instructors from the six Centers of Excellence (COEs) in the target regions. Originally, the first of the capacity trainings on skills identified through the development of the ISPs was planned as a face-to-face meeting in March 2020. As this was not possible, READ II reconsidered its response to the gaps identified in the ISPs through a virtual professional network. The purpose of the KEG is to continue professional development among MT instructors at different CTEs. The virtual professional network was jumpstarted due to the COVID-19 crisis, but it is expected to be as useful when colleges resume classes, specifically for MT CTE instructors to share knowledge, skills, and resources and encourage interaction and collaboration among CTE Instructors. READ II uses the KEG to post professional resources on a weekly basis for discussion, and also provides a platform for MT instructors to share best practices, knowledge, and resources as well as to engage in meaningful dialogue.

The platform was first piloted with eight instructors from four colleges, two in Somali and two in Oromia. The platform was found user-friendly and interesting among the pilot group. READ II then expanded the KEG to all MT Instructors in the six COEs (more than 60 MT instructors).

Following that, READ II developed the KEG Code of Conduct, the Learn Strategy, and a 10-week scope and sequence, and created a Telegram page, identified a list of MT instructors in CoEs as users, and used Telegram as the medium for the KEG. Since the creation of the group, the following topics were posted for discussion:

- Welcome/introductions.
- How COVID-19 has affected roles and responsibilities.
- Developing oral language and vocabulary (Part 1)
- Developing oral language and vocabulary (Part 2)
- Developing oral language and vocabulary (Part 3)
- Developing oral language and vocabulary (Part 4)
- Engaging families and communities in the learning of children (Part 1)
- Engaging families and communities in the learning of children (Part 2)
- Gender Responsive Pedagogy (Part 1)
- Gender Responsive Pedagogy (Part 2)
- Integration of reading and writing
- Benefits of reading aloud for children.
- Social Emotional Learning

CTE MT instructors' participation in the group and their feedback on READ II's initiative is positive and encouraging. In the last quarter, the READ II pre-service component, with the intention of strengthening the facilitation capacity of regional pre-service coordinators, delivered a one-day virtual orientation training via Zoom on how to facilitate/moderate the KEG.

Finalizing, field-testing, and rolling out Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI) programs on English speaking and listening skills. As part of its objective of strengthening English departments in CoEs, READ II planned content to develop twenty 30-minute Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI) lessons to improve the listening and speaking skill of pre-service teachers. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, READ II was able to finalize the development and recording of the 20 planned IAI lessons.

As discussed in the COVID-19 Mitigation Plan, READ II adapted its Let's Talk IAI programs to be broadcast via regional radio stations and developed a listeners' guide to support listening at home. Following that, the project worked with REBs to arrange broadcasting via their educational radio stations to reach students. Broadcasting started in all regions except for SNNP in Year 3. Communications with the SNNPR and Sidama REB indicated that the old SNNP and the Sidama regions will start broadcasting in October 2020. The commitment observed from REBs in airing the Let's Talk programs was encouraging, and the Oromia REB's commitment to reach all pre-service students in the region is commendable.

Following the completion of the IAI lessons and development of the Teacher's Guide, READ II provided a virtual orientation training via Zoom for English instructors drawn from COEs. The objective of this virtual training was to orient English instructors on how to use the IAI lessons and the accompanying teachers' guide in their classrooms. The major topics covered during the orientation include what interactive audio programs are and how they differ from regular radio programs, how IAI programs can develop students' English listening and speaking skills, how and when to use audio programs, the Instructor's Guide, and the Listener's Guide, the role of the teacher, the radio teacher, and the learner in the Let's Talk interactive audio programs, and how to facilitate a Let's Talk interactive audio program. The orientation was held from September 14-18, 2020. English instructors were actively engaged in the orientation, expressed their satisfaction on the organization of the orientation program, and look forward to integrating the programs into their teaching.

Currently, the READ II pre-service team is preparing to distribute the IAI lessons and accompanying teachers' guide to the CTEs and other READ II partners and beneficiaries (MOE, REB, CTEs, and the TARGET program). For this purpose, READ II procured more than 100 USBs and completed uploading of the programs to provide to partners in October 2020.

Cross-Cutting Activities

IR D: Cross-Cutting: Prepare Vulnerable and At-Risk Populations to Succeed

IRD.I Prepare vulnerable and at-risk populations to succeed.

Training on Student Success Support Toolkit (SSST). The Crosscutting Unit developed and printed 11,120 "Student Success Support Toolkit" (SSST) manuals for use as a training and reference resource to support the capacity building of REBs, ZEDs, WEO experts, Cluster Supervisors, School Directors, Deputy School Directors, teachers, students and school communities. READ II also developed and distributed a SSST Facilitator's Manual and Participant's Guide. These were distributed to target schools, and cluster resource centers and to the MOE, REBs, and WEOs to serve as resource documents. All the SSST modules that were distributed were handed over to schools using "Model 19" (the official government goods receivable form) to ensure that they are property of the schools. The modules are available in READ II's seven MT languages.

Relevant service providers and beneficiaries including the MOE, REBs, ZEDs, WEOs, CSs, GCCs, and SDs received training on the SSST modules. Thirty-two master trainers were initially prepared to train 233 trainers. These trainers in turn cascaded the training to SDs, CSs and

GCCs. The master trainers were drawn from MOE, REBs and CTEs while the trainers were selected from REBs, ZEDs, WEOs, LIPs and CSs. As a result, 6,675 SDs, CSs and GCCs received a five-day intensive training. Table 12 presents the number of trainers trained by institution.

Table 12: # of TOTs for SSST training

Regions	MOE		REB		Zone Gender Experts		WEOs Experts/ Supervisors		Cluster Supervisors		Local Imp. Partners		Grand Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Addis Abeba	1	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	6	13	0	1	12	15	27
Amhara	0	0	1	0	0	0	11	3	39	1	0	0	51	4	55
Oromia	0	1	0	1	0	0	16	0	32	1	0	0	48	3	51
SNNPR	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	29	8	1	0	32	9	41
Sidama	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	24	5	1	0	25	6	31
Tigray	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	11	2	0	0	15	2	17
Somali	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	11	0	11
Region Total	1	1	3	2	1	2	41	3	146	30	2	1	194	39	233

The training covered the early warning system, first grade screeners, back-to-school campaigns, creating a child friendly school environment, positive discipline and school codes of conduct, social-emotional learning, inclusive education, gender equitable schools, and school grants.

Cluster supervisors, school directors and gender club coordinators took the information from their training back to their schools and oriented deputy school directors, teachers, students, and PTSA members. It is expected that trained directors and cluster supervisors will in turn provide orientation on SSST modules to teachers and students in their respective schools.



SSST and GCC Training and Group Work Session, Sidama

The training is intended to enable schools to offer more support to at-risk students, promote gender equitable environments in schools, and provide Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and psycho-social support to students to prevent dropouts and increase student survival rate. The

one-day school level orientation conducted at each school alerted school communities about the concepts and implementation modalities of the SSST and Gender Club Guidelines. The school directors and gender club coordinators (GCC), supported by cluster supervisors, were able to develop SSST action plans. The plans have not yet been implemented due to COVID-19. However, READ II is set to support schools to implement some of the activities delayed because of COVID-19 as part the forthcoming school grants.

Table 13: # of School Directors, Cluster Supervisors and Gender Club Coordinators who participated in SSST training

Region	Language	Gender Coordinators			School Directors			Cluster Supervisors			Total		
		F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Addis Ababa	Amharic	22	104	126	123	7	130	24	50	74	169	161	330
Amhara	Amharic	819	97	916	53	864	917	7	192	199	879	1,153	2,032
Oromia	Afaan Oromoo	893	102	995	96	907	1003	9	149	158	998	1,158	2,156
Tigray	Tigrigna	241	0	241	33	208	241	8	39	47	282	247	529
Somali	Af-soomaali	96	0	96	1	95	96	3	43	46	100	138	238
Sidama	Sidaamu Afoo	224	51	275	13	266	279	5	82	87	242	399	641
SNNP	Hadiyyisa	136	7	143	7	135	142	0	42	42	143	184	327
	Wolayttatto	149	34	183	6	177	183	1	55	56	156	266	422
Total		2580	395	2975	332	2659	2991	57	652	709	2,969	3,706	6,675

The training on SSST was highly appreciated by participants. As a notable example, the Tigray Region reported that participants acknowledged the importance of the training in improving their frontiers of knowledge and skills to support at-risk and vulnerable students. Feedback from the participants included:

- The training was provided at an appropriate time when most schools are facing challenges in identifying and supporting at-risk and vulnerable children. The training helped to create an understanding of the needs of the target students.
- The group work activities in the training promoted active participation and created an opportunity for learning from one another and conducting self-evaluation.
- The training created common understanding among school directors, cluster supervisors, and gender club coordinators to jointly work to improve the school learning environment.

Childcare services were provided in most of the training centers during SSST and GCC trainings to support mothers to participate in the workshops while their children are attended to at the workshop site. For example, when Oromia Region conducted the training, 99 mothers (teachers) who attended the training benefited from childcare service provision facilitated by the READ II project. If the childcare service was not provided, some of them (if not all) would not have attended the training and their schools would have been late in implementing the SSST school-level capacity building and implementation.



Children benefited from the Temporary Child Care Service During the SSST and GCC Training, Oromia

Major outcomes of the SSST and GCCs Training and Orientations Workshops. The trainings set out to help schools provide extra support to prevent students from dropping out and enable them to improve their reading and writing skills. After the SSST and GCC orientation, school directors, cluster supervisors and gender club coordinators reported that their schools made some changes. For example, some schools:

- Restructured and established gender clubs and developed various supportive mechanisms for female students and students with various disabilities.
- Sensitized the stakeholders/partners to have a better understanding of the role they play in education, to be aware of the challenges in the education system, and to seek solutions to make schools conducive for learning.
- The training enabled schools and communities to identify and mobilize resources to achieve better results in promoting the learning of at-risk and vulnerable students.
- Schools improved their partnership with parents ensuring that the parents get educational information about their children and showed full participation in the process.
- Schools tried to increase female students' active participation in school level activities.

IRD.2: Student Success Support Grant (SSSG) School Improvement Plan (SIP) Integration

READ II planned to provide Student Success Support Grants (SSSG) or SIP grants in two cohorts. Preparations for a total of 1,648 schools in the first cohort was completed when COVID-19 forced the closure of education institutions in March 2020.

The SSS Grants (SIP grants) were meant to dynamize school level activities by providing seed money directly to the schools. The major focus of the grants was to use the funds to improve the reading and writing skills of children, but the grants were also meant to address issues related to at-risk students and the girl child.

The project organized a two-day pre-award orientation workshop to help school directors and cluster supervisors in planning feasible school improvement plans (SIPs). The other objective of the pre-award workshop was to acquaint the SDs and CSs with the grant application process and grant eligibility requirements. 120 participants from the regions attended a national-level pre-

award workshop to receive guidance on READ II's school grant policies and procedures.



A workshop on Student Success Support Grant (SSSG) School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Table 14: READ II Cohort I – SSSG - SIP Target Zones, Woreda and Schools

Region	Zone/Sub-city	Woreda	# School
ADDIS_ABABA	3	39	84
AMHARA	6	7	516
OROMIA	4	9	537
SIDAMA	1	5	137
SNNP	1	6	169
SOMALI	1	2	56
TIGRAY	2	7	149
Total	18	75	1,648

Following the national level pre-award orientation, each region organized similar orientation meetings with SDs and CSs so that each school could identify problems, develop school improvement plans and apply for the READ II grants through their respective woredas.

The review of the SIPs submitted to READ II indicate that most schools plan

to use the grant monies mainly for organizing support to vulnerable and at-risk students, supporting gender club activities, promoting a conducive school environment, enhancing the professional development of teachers, implementing teacher mentoring, encouraging school- and community-level reading corners and camps, organizing reading and writing competitions, encourage students and teachers to focus on producing local stories, and generally supporting the reading and writing activities at school and community level.

As indicated earlier, the rollout of the school grants was suspended because of COVID-19. Now that the government has decided to reopen schools, the rollout of the school grant plan has been updated and included in the project's Year 4 annual work plan with a minor adjustment to activities and budget. Part of the grant funds are now allocated to create safe and healthy school environment in response to COVID-19 possible impact. Accordingly, schools may use grant funds to support activities in the following broad areas: 1) creating a conducive and safe school/learning environment to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic, 2) promoting effective use of existing instructional materials (teachers' guide, student textbooks, SRMs, etc.) and organizing writing and reading competitions and tutorial classes, 3) supporting the strengthening of teacher mentoring, 4) supporting the creation of a gender equitable school/learning environment, and 5) identifying and supporting at-risk and vulnerable students.

Provide Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) training to Cluster Supervisors and School Directors. In the fourth quarter, READ II participated in the development of the MOE's School Reopening Guidelines, which include measures to provide Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) support to students after school reopening (please see also under IR 3). The Guidelines provide practical advice for taking care of one's own mental well-being, communicating with empathy, and helping people suffering from stress or severe distress.

READ II has now been tasked with prioritizing conducting a three-day training to SDs and CSs on PSS/SEL and other urgent topics that will help schools to open effectively in the first quarter of Year 4. This training will help cluster supervisors, school directors, teachers, students, and school communities to integrate psychosocial support skills into their daily routine.

[IR E: Support to adolescent girls through a structured gender approach](#)

READ II has achieved most of its anticipated goals under IRE for Year 3 and can share some positive impact despite school interruptions and descopeing of some project activities, as well as delays resulting from each of these unexpected events.

IR E.1: Introduce social messaging materials.

2019 International Day of the Girl Child. To highlight the successes and challenges of girls, regions celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child during the month of October 2019. Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions held successful events in schools, where female leaders and students performed skits and wrote and recited poems and essay. The most successful female students were awarded school supplies. Events were attended by REB Heads, Deputy Heads, and other REB and WEO officials as well as school administrators and students. Events were canceled in SNNPR due to insecurity and Tigray region was unable to commit to the event.

2020 International Women's Day Event. READ II and the MOE Women, Children and Youth (WCY) Directorate collaborated on hosting the International Women's Day event on March 10, 2020. The event focused on the READ II-MOE collaboration around improving female leadership in the education sector. The WCY Directorate Director, Yeshihareg Negash, presented the MOE's Action Plan to improve female leadership. It is expected that the MOE's public commitment to policy reform and concrete actions to improve female leadership will keep them accountable as well as foster financial and technical commitments from other implementing partners. Several MOE Directors commented on the need for implementing the Action Plan and asked for READ II's assistance. A panel discussion was held with school-level female leaders from each region, during which female leaders expressed their challenges and suggestions for

Table 15: # of participants at the International Women's Day Event

Type of Participants	Women	Men	Total
MOE Directorate Directors	3	4	7
MOE Experts	1	19	20
Other Government Entities	6	11	17
School-level Female Leaders	4	0	4
NGOs	3	1	4
REBs experts	2	0	2
Total	19	35	54

improving their working environments. The MOE also did a presentation on education outcome statistics and READ II gave a speech on the link between female leadership and education outcomes. Table 15 presents the number of participants at the event for different level of education governance.

READ II recently informed the MOE WCY Directorate of the descopeing of project activities, and they expressed their disappointment that female leadership was among the discontinued interventions. They are still committed to executing their action plans but did say it would be difficult without some financial support from the project.

Gender Radio Drama *Menta Hasab* (Dual Thoughts). READ II produced a 13-episode radio drama in seven languages, the goal of which is to provide highly relatable and entertaining gender-themed scenarios to promote reflection and dialogue on gender equality, gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices, and female leadership. All 13 episodes of the radio drama were broadcasted in Amharic on Fana Radio FM twice weekly from June 7 to September 13, 2020 in four regions: Addis Ababa, Amhara, SNNPR, and Sidama. Both Addis Ababa and Amhara REB Education Radio Stations are currently broadcasting the radio drama for free on their radio channels.



Muniya Habtie, a teacher, listening to radio drama Menta Hassab Episode 3 with her family, Amhara region

Production of the radio drama in the other six languages is nearly complete and READ II is still on track for broadcasting them in the first quarter of Year 4.

At the end of the broadcast of each episode, a call-in number was announced so that listeners could provide READ II with feedback on the radio drama. READ II received 684 messages via SMS, almost all of which were very positive. Below are a few examples:

The drama felt like I was watching a movie, I'm a huge fan.

It's a very good and exciting drama. I've never missed an episode. But please add more time, don't just cut the drama. I'm excited about the ending. The drama is very entertaining and educational.

It's sounds like our story. Great drama!

Wow! The drama is very educational. Keep it up. Gelila please forgive your brother. I seriously cried when he cried.

It's great. Let's fight violence against women/girls.

Abedu Muhiye, a TDP Expert from Kelala WEO, said of the drama:

The Menta Hassab Drama which is produced by READ II is important not only for lower level but also for secondary school students, particularly female students, who will get important lessons on how to protect themselves from violence and to report any act of violence to parents or any close person. The drama also makes aware parents to not allow their children to stay with neighbors or persons who are not members of the family. I like the drama and even recorded it for documentation and future use. I also shared with those who missed to listen due to power interruption and low sound quality due to rain. A lack of radio in some households in our woredas is one of the major challenges that hinder students not to listen the drama which requires to design ways how to address those students when schools reopen.

In May 2020, READ II staff and REB/ZED Gender and SIP Experts administered a baseline survey to 309 students, parents and school staff (158 women and 151 men) to estimate the reach of the broadcasts and attitude and behavior changes resulting from listening to the radio drama among project beneficiaries. Some key results were:

- Women surveyed were much more likely to have listened to the radio drama if they heard of it and had a listening device (at 63%, compared to 20% of men). For those who did not listen, the reasons stated were that they either could not listen during the broadcast time or they did not always have access to a listening device.
- Among students surveyed, attitudes were quite positive for women/girls and men/boys having equal opportunities to educational opportunities (Female [F]=98%, Male [M]=95%), but they were less positive for job (F=89%, M=84%), political (F=85%, M=68%), and economic opportunities (F=91%, M=87%).
- 89% of female students and 71% of male students agreed that girls and boys should share domestic chores equally.
- Almost all adult participants agreed that girls/women and boys/men should share domestic chores and have equal opportunities in all domains – education, jobs, political and economic, except in Addis Ababa which only 50% of both men and women agreed that girls/women and boys/men should have equal opportunities in education.
- 79% of male students surveyed disagreed that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten in a marriage, but 100% of female students and all adults disagreed with this statement.
- When adults were asked what they would do if their daughter or female student told them they experience violence, no one said they would do “nothing.” Only a few students reported that they would do “nothing” if they witnessed violence.

Because behaviors and attitudes were reportedly more positive than expected, social desirability bias may be a factor, in that responses were more positive than respondents’ real attitudes. At the end of this reporting period, the endline survey was in the process of being administered, and

some qualitative questions were added to better detect how the radio drama affected attitudinal and behavior change. The final report will be shared with USAID next quarter.

Finally, READ II developed a 16-page Discussion Guide to accompany the radio drama. The Discussion Guide will help students to engage in dialogue with their peers and internalize the messages in the radio drama. The Discussion Guide was translated into seven languages and validated by the REBs. During the first quarter of Year 4, the Guide will be printed and be distributed along with USBs with the recorded radio drama for school gender clubs to use.

IR E.2: Support safe school procedures

During Year 3 in collaboration with the MOE, READ II mapped out SRGBV interventions in Ethiopia. Interventions consisted of school club support, life skills training, theatre, gender responsive pedagogy, and some media coverage. Among the nine MOE implementing partners who work with schools, two of them did not do any SRGBV work and only two partners worked on the response side of SRGBV. This exercise confirms that SRGBV work is relatively new and much more work is needed to systematically address the crisis.

READ II also designed a five-hour orientation session for school directors on SRGBV prevention and response. The orientation highlights how working on rendering schools and classrooms gender equitable and implementing rights-based positive discipline actions will set the foundation for reducing incidents of SRGBV. The orientation also focuses on setting up school SRGBV Committees, SRGBV first response, referrals, and other best practices in responding to SRGBV. Master training, TOTs, and training of school directors will be held in the first quarter of Year 4 on these topics. This training will be combined with the PSS/SEL training mentioned under IRD.

IR E.3: Support Girls' Clubs

Gender Club Training Workshop. READ II held a three-day Gender Club training workshop in all targeted regions, with the aim of orienting Gender Club Coordinators, School Directors and Cluster Supervisors on the MOE Gender Club Guidelines, as well as basic gender issues and gender-based violence (GBV). The training content focused on gender norms, gender, and power, GBV prevention and response, and human rights. All sessions were meant to be informative but also focused on how and why these topics should be discussed during gender club meetings, linking gender issues with education outcomes.

Monitoring visits conducted in Tigray, Amhara and Addis Ababa regions revealed that gender clubs are using the training content to discuss gender and GBV, and Gender Club Coordinators reported that the content has helped them enrich the discussions and make them more participatory. Gender Club Coordinators were found to be well versed in the details of the MOE Gender Club Guidelines. All gender clubs monitored revealed that boys are also active members, which was not the case before the training.

A disaggregated summary of the number of training participants for Year 3 can be found in the table below.

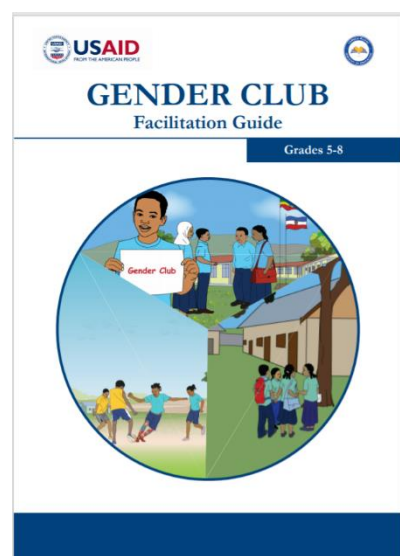
Table 16: Number of participants in the SSST/Gender Club Training Workshop

Region	Language	Gender Coordinators		School Directors		Cluster Supervisors		Total		
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Total
Addis Ababa	Amharic	22	104	123	7	24	50	169	161	330
Amhara	Amharic	819	97	53	864	7	192	879	1153	2032
Oromia	Afaan Oromoo	893	102	96	907	9	149	998	1158	2156
Tigray	Tigrigna	241	0	33	208	8	39	282	247	529
Somali	Af-soomaali	96	0	1	95	3	43	100	138	238
Sidama	Sidaamu Afoo	224	51	13	266	5	82	242	399	641
SNNP	Hadiyyisa	136	7	7	135	0	42	143	184	327
	Wolayttatto	149	34	6	177	1	55	156	266	422
Total		2580	395	332	2659	57	652	2969	3706	6675

Gender Club Materials Development. In collaboration with the MOE WCY Directorate, READ II developed a Gender Club Facilitation Guide and five gender-themed student books, which aim to dive deeper into key issues, but also encourage reading for grade 5-8 students. The titles of the student books are:

1. We Are All Equal! (gender equality and human rights)
2. I Won't Stand and Watch! (SRGBV)
3. Girls Can and Do Lead! (female leadership)
4. Her Body, Her Choice (harmful traditional practices)
5. Once a Month (menstruation)

Materials were pre-tested in Amhara, Tigray, SNNP, and Addis Ababa regions. Pre-testing was scheduled to occur in late March 2020 in Oromia and Somali but was suspended due to the closing of schools following the COVID-19 outbreak. Materials were validated by the following REBs: Addis Ababa, Amhara, SNNPR (for both Wolliaytta and Hadiyyssa languages), Sidama, and Tigray. Oromia and Somali REBs plan to validate the materials early in Year 4. Printing and distribution to schools will also occur in the first quarter of Year 4.



IR E.4 Increase female role models available to girls.

Gender Audit Validation Workshop. In April 2019, READ II worked with the MOE and six REBs to conduct a Gender Audit on female leadership of selected REBs and WEOs. READ II co-lead with the MOE Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (WYCA) and Teachers and Educational Leaders Development Directorates a validation workshop for the Gender Audit Report and associated action plan. The event held on November 19, 2019 was attended by 22 MOE and REB officials in Addis Ababa, and the closing remarks were made by Acting WCY Director Yeshihareg Negash, as well as Tsion Teklu, State Minister of Education for the Strategic Leadership and Development Office. During the workshop, key findings were discussed according to the Commission for Advancement of Women's Gender Integration Framework, which is an internationally utilized framework for gender mainstreaming results. The findings were very well

received, and no modifications to the report were requested. The action plan was also presented during the workshop and was well received, but there were some minor modifications requested by MOE and REB officials. Namely, there were some concerns about budgeting for certain activities and some policy changes that would require higher government approvals.



The gender audit validation workshop, H.E Tsion Teklu (right) State Minister for MOE giving the closing remarks at the event

Female Leadership Forum. Regional Female Leadership Forums were held in January, February and March 2020 in all targeted regions, with selected women who participated in the GEQIP female leadership training and affirmative action program, as well as representatives from REB and WEO Institutional Capacity-Building Team (ICBT), including REB Heads and Deputy Heads. The table below shows the profile of the participants. In addition to the number in Table 17, participants included three MOE Officials (1 woman, 2 men), one USAID Representative from Tigray, and two representatives from the Teachers' Association's Gender Units (1 woman, 1 man).



Female Leadership Forum in Addis Ababa

Following a presentation of the Gender Audit results, women shared their experiences and leadership roles, which were very similar across regions and consistent with the Gender Audit findings. This was the first time these women were able to share their challenges with REB, zonal and woreda leadership, which seemed to have opened the way for future dialogue. Female leaders and the ICBTs then adapted the MOE and REB Action Plans and discussed practical solutions moving forward.

To date, all seven REBs, two ZEDs, and 46 woredas have completed their action plans to improve female leadership, and some REBs have already taken some steps, such as budgeting action items.

The Gender Expert from the Addis Ababa REB developed guidelines for holding sub-city female leadership forums on a quarterly basis. The Amhara REB revised the regional Placement, Promotion and Transfer Guideline so that female leaders would be assigned to schools closer to their residence. The Amhara REB also committed to each woreda increasing the

Table 17: # of participants in the Regional Female Leadership Forums

Region	School-level GEQIP- trained female leaders	School- level Female leaders (not GEQIP- trained) ¹	REB ICBT		ZED ICBT		WEO ICBT	
			F	M	F	M	F	M
Addis Ababa	25	0	2	5	0	0	0	10
Amhara	50	0	0	4	2	4	1	12
Oromia	22	12	1	0	4	1	0	17
Sidama	6	3	0	1	0	0	10	7
SNNPR	12	13	0	2	0	1	4	10
Somali	17	8	2	3	0	0	3	7
Total	132	36	5	15	6	6	18	63

proportion of schools led by female school directors or vice-directors from 6.4% to at least 30%. As a result of READ II's female leadership interventions, 341 women were promoted to leadership positions.

Orientation of Female Role Models for Students. Per the MOE Gender Club Guidelines, one of the tasks of Gender Club Coordinators is to organize female role model visits for gender club members. Since Year I, READ II has been creating and subsequently updating a database of female role models from all sectors and professions. Although there are female leaders in schools, it is important for students to see that women can succeed in many different professional arenas.

On February 16, 2020, an orientation of 78 female role models in Addis Ababa region was organized for educators, managers, journalists, writers, children's book authors, poets, and artists. The orientation prepared women to speak with students about their profession and their trajectory to success, with topics such as the importance of role models for students' success, qualities of role models, and the process of inspiration.

This activity was delayed in other regions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequently discontinued as part of the project rescoping process.

IR F: Crisis modifier and coordination of emergency response planning

USAID's Policy Framework (2019) emphasizes the importance of resilience building in ensuring the journey to self-reliance is not unduly compromised during crises and natural disasters. The framework underscores the critical role of building resilience capacities of communities at different levels to prevent, mitigate, and recover from crises that might otherwise set them back. Concurrent to this framework, READ II's crisis modifier programming has been providing services to primary school children who are unexpectedly confronted by the effects of conflict or any other emergency-related events to continue their education without interruption.

Through its Crisis Modifier interventions, READ II has been working to ensure that gains made by its interventions in IRs 1-3 and Cross-Cutting D and E results to prepare at-risk and vulnerable students for learning success and to create gender equitable school environments are “sustained rather than squandered” in crisis.

To help the READ II project materialize the above indicated aim, various activities were planned under the Crisis Modifier component for the reporting period. The major activities are highlighted below.

Coordination with National Education Cluster. The READ II CRU continued to represent the work of READ II at the NEC forums and support coordination efforts at the national level. Accordingly, the CRU took part in NEC coordination meetings held throughout the reporting period, thereby contributing to the overall coordination of EiE interventions and the planning and coordination of the NEC-led national EiE assessment carried out during the first quarter.

Strong engagement with the NEC helped coordinate and synergize READ II’s crisis response activities with those of other implementing partners in the same target locations. The 5W (the why, who, when, what and whose questions) mapping compiled and shared by the cluster minimized the duplication of efforts. It also helped READ II to focus on target regions and woredas not covered by other implementing partners while planning crisis modifier (CM) interventions.

Identify and Assess Crises. READ II provided technical and logistical support to the assessment team deployed by the NEC in West and Central Zones of Gondar in Amhara, Borena Zone in Oromia, and Fafan Zone in Somali. READ II’s participation in the assessment provided the project with an opportunity to take a closer look at how the assessment is executed and to draw lessons from the approaches and methods employed to gather reliable data. The main challenge of organizing crisis response is the lack of accurate and reliable data in the education sector.

Delivery of Learning and Recreational Materials. In collaboration with the MOE, target REBs, zones and woredas, READ II procured and delivered scholastic and recreational materials to target WEOs, who in turn, distributed the materials to schools and target students. Woredas received extensive orientation on the distribution procedures and protocols and were given all the necessary forms to capture and document beneficiary information.

Following the delivery of materials to woredas, READ II conducted monitoring visits to:

- check whether target woredas delivered the learning and recreational materials to identified internally displaced primary school-aged children in a timely manner.
- assess the extent to which the orientation given to WEO heads and focal persons contributed to maintaining uniformity in distribution, and review summary reports prepared at the school and woreda levels.
- conduct on-the-spot verification and provide feedback on the distribution reports.
- collect feedback from beneficiaries, WEOs, schools, Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs), and students on the importance of the support provided by READ II.

Accordingly, the project conducted monitoring visits to twelve beneficiary woredas, five target woredas in Amhara, and seven target woredas in SNNPR. The monitoring visits to target schools in each of the visited woredas were carried out with READ II focal persons and/or delegated representatives and WEO heads (where available). After concluding the school visits in each woreda, findings and feedback were shared with WEO heads, including action points that needed improvement. The detailed reports of these monitoring visits have also been shared within READ II. The findings indicate that woredas have distributed the materials they received to schools even though the quality documentation varies for woreda to woreda. Some woredas used their own format other than the format the project provided. Some woredas collected only verification documents showing the delivery of materials to the schools, and not to individual students. In general, the visiting teams confirmed that participation woredas were up to expectation and that identifying points of contact (POC) for the delivery did help. Some of the lessons learned during the materials distribution under the second activation of Crisis Modifier (CM2) include:

- Identification of woreda officers and focal persons and the provision of orientation to them on the procedures and requirements of materials distribution ahead of the distribution strongly contributed to the proper distribution of the materials.
- Most visited schools and woredas are using the correct accountability formats provided by the project. Target woredas collected distribution lists/accountability formats from their target schools for READ II. It was cost-effective and engaged woredas, promoting ownership.

All 62 target woredas completed the distribution of materials to schools and target students. A total of 452,860 (258,425 male and 194,435 female) crisis-affected children in 1,968 schools benefited across the four regions (refer to Table 18).

Feedback obtained on the process from WEO Heads and Officers, as well as from SDs, has been very positive. It should be noted that in some woredas, materials distribution was a bit late because of heavy rains that made rural roads impassable.

Table 18: # of Schools and Students Benefiting from the Second READ II CM Response

Region	Planned Number of Target Students	Actual Number of Target Students (From School Distribution Reports Submitted to WEOs)			Variance	Actual in %
		Male	Female	Total		
Amhara	65,942	43,244	40,677	83,921	17,979	127
Oromia	251,264	158,843	108,614	267,457	16,193	106
SNNPR	60,083	34,035	26,863	60,898	815	101
Somali	39,398	22,303	18,281	40,584	1,186	103
Total	416,687	258,425	194,435	452,860	36,173	108

Government counterparts acknowledged that, without the provision of the materials, many of the students who benefited from this support would not have continued their schooling or they would have been forced to reuse previous year's exercise books (if it had empty pages). They acknowledged that READ II's support contributed highly to:

- Giving hope to and bringing displaced children back to school.
- Reducing tardiness and dropout.
- Providing recreation opportunities and an outlet to recover from trauma caused by conflicts.

- Encouraging students to spend more time in school playing football or volleyball.

The team found that many parents started returning to their places of origin in West Guji Zone, leaving their children behind in Gedeo attending school until the situation becomes more stable. READ II's material support relieved parents from buying school materials for their children to continue their learning. Had it not been for READ II, parents would not have any other means to support their children.

One other major activity planned for the second half of the year was to scale up the Social-Emotional Learning Skills training that was previously piloted in Qoloji IDP camps in Babile woreda of Somali region to other target regions. The plan to scale up the training was based on the findings of internal assessments on the effects of the training on students and teachers' behavior. However, due to COVID-19 pandemic shutdown decree by the government that resulted in closure of schools, gatherings were restricted as well as stay-at-home mitigation measures taken, so the plan to provide the training has been indefinitely suspended. In lieu of this activity, READ II adapted the SEL/PSS content to train school directors and cluster supervisors to assist their teachers and student in adjusting to the new learning environment when schools reopen.

Re-planning/Reprogramming and Closeout Activities. The effect of COVID 19 on READ II activities particularly on the Crisis Modifier activities has been very much significant. With the conformation of the first cases of COVID-19 in Ethiopia towards the end of the second quarter of Year 3, various measures taken to control and contain the spread of the diseases mainly resulted in immediate closure of schools. As a result, many of the activities the READ II CRU had planned for the remainder of the year were suspended, requiring the unit to revisit the overall work plan for the rest of the project period. In the rescoping process, it has become apparent that there will not be additional activation of CM funding during the remaining three years of the project. This decision led to the termination of the contractual agreement the IRC had with the Prime on August 31, 2020.

As a result, READ II CRU team spent significant time during the last two quarters of the year working on reprogramming of activities.

- i. **Re-planning/Reprogramming:** READ II – CRU revised the overall work plan of the Crisis Modifier unit to reflect the current changes made as a result of COVID 19 operational challenges and other circumstances affecting the overall project. Accordingly, the original program description was revised to include project support in building the capacity of the Ministry of Education and its structures to respond to crisis in a timely manner.
- ii. **Closeout Activities:** As a result of project rescoping which has significantly reduced funding for Crisis modifier, sub-agreement with IRC has been terminated on August 31, 2020. The CTU team prepared its closeout plan and worked to smoothly closeout and handover the Crisis Modifier component and its activities to the Prime partner. Going forward, creative will lead the CP component.

3.0 Ensuring Sustainability and Local Ownership

Project cycle, a popular development tool used by several cooperating partners, provides a framework to induce development, but rarely makes accommodation for an exit strategy that sustains development. This manifests itself in project benefits ending with whatever impact the project has made, leaving ill-equipped local ministries or under-resourced NGOs to meet local development needs and fill the gap of services terminated because of project close-out. In response to setback, USAID/READ II Activity put in place practical measures aimed at changing such a trend by including deliberate and consciously planned actions to ensure sustainability.

By design, READ II's general approach to sustainability and local ownership is to follow a "a whole student, whole teacher, whole school, whole district" strategy, which views schools as centers of learning and care. READ II is designed to ensure "whole school" by helping teachers, school directors, cluster supervisors, woreda education officers, parents, and communities to jointly address the academic, physical, and emotional needs of students. Teachers have been trained, mentored, and supported to strengthen their skills, and become responsive and reflective practitioners.

During the reporting period, READ II implemented its holistic approach which ensure that::

- several officers in each school (MT teachers, the mentors, the gender club coordinator, the school director) are trained in, understand, and are engaged in implementing and/or monitoring the project interventions.
- the reading camps are linked to the PTSA and KETB for sustainable governance and resource allocation, and to the school director and MT teachers for technical support.
- The Cluster Supervisor also understands, supports, and monitors the school-based interventions in each school and reports on progress to the WEO.
- WEOs and REBs are engaged in monitoring project interventions through routine monitoring and the LEMA, and in decision-making about corrections through annual reflection meetings.

READ II supports government counterparts to build their capacity through "Learning-by-doing". Relevant counterparts are always engaged either as service providers or beneficiaries in all READ II activities- training, material development, monitoring, etc. The MOE and REBS always have the opportunity to contribute to and validate new training materials before they are finalized and used; and the Early Grade Reading intervention is built on the foundation of the textbooks and teachers' guides that are already in all the target schools. Cornerstones of the READ II program such as the mentoring program are based upon guidelines that were painstakingly developed in consultation with the MOE and are approved by them. The approach that we have adopted to Classroom Continuous Assessment is based upon the approach and materials developed and approved by the MOE through GEQIP-E.

The strong uptake of the interventions by the Amhara and SNNPR REB in February/March 2020 and later by Oromia REB was a very encouraging sign of their interest and commitment to supporting and (in some cases) upscaling READ II interventions. In Amhara region, target woredas and zones reaffirmed their commitment to monitor and support cluster supervisors and school

directors to ensure that READ II initiatives become their regular responsibilities. They also officially requested soft copies all the SRMs printed and distributed to target schools with the support of READ II to reprint and distribute them to school in non-READ II woredas. In SNNPR, Wolaytta Zone conducted a zonal workshop to scale up READ II's community outreach component using its own resources. The Oromia Regional State Education Bureau expressed strong interest to scale up reading parks in all schools in the region. READ II will continue to work through and within the government structures to ensure integration of project interventions into education system. This theme will be revisited during the annual review meetings in Project Year Four to prepare for culmination and institutionalization in project Years Five and Six.

4.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

As is critical for project management, the READ II MEL team has established a robust MEL system. The system involves the integration of a number of elements including data quality assessment procedures, the design and implementation of a comprehensive monitoring system, school profile mapping, assessments, the design of the COVID-19 period MEL plan including revision of the READ II Life of Award MEL Plan and CLA, as well as the establishment of a learning agenda. In the sections that follow, major accomplishments of the project under MEL have been highlighted.

Routine Activity Monitoring. READ II designed and implemented a comprehensive routine monitoring guide and tools. The tools are standardized for use both by national- and regional-level project officers and counterparts. The tools include checklists for observation of classrooms and reading camps as well as interviews of teachers, directors, school cluster supervisors, WEOs, and students.

Before the school closures due to the pandemic, READ II undertook routine monitoring visits in fifty-three (53) schools in six regions¹² to document implementation progress, challenges and lessons learned and identify areas for improvement. Major findings include: i) 92 % of G1-4 and 97% of G5-8 teachers had received READ II's teacher training, ii) mentoring had started in most of the observed schools, iii) 64% of teachers interviewed indicated that they had been assigned mentors, iv) most teachers had started using mobile-based key message hotline support services, and v) about 96% of the reading camps in observed schools were functioning.

On the other hand, some areas for improvements were also identified. These include the need to strengthen the functionality of mentoring and teacher study groups, limited access to the MT teachers guide and student textbooks (only 36% of randomly selected students had a textbook on the day of the assessment), and the fact that many classrooms were not print-rich. Delays in SRM distribution from schools to reading camps, limited KETB engagement to support reading camps and volunteers and limited engagement of cluster supervisors and school directors in cluster level mentoring, classroom observation and teacher support, and inadequate institutional planning and goal setting are some of the shortcomings identified from the routine monitoring.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, READ II established a remote monitoring system to monitor radio and TV program broadcasting. READ II in collaboration with WKW has developed an

¹² Information for SNNPR also includes the information about the new Sidama region during the routine monitoring exercise.

Automated Broadcast Monitoring System (ABMS). This is being utilized as a data collection, analysis, and reporting platform. READ II assigned 18 regional staff to monitor the radio and TV broadcasts across MT languages in the seven regions.

READ II will resume the use of the routine monitoring system to support the performance improvement and quality control process once schools resume in Year 4.

School Profile Mapping. READ II undertook school profile data collection for its target schools during Year 3. This process captures key information such as the number of students, teachers, directors, and vice directors, the number of classrooms, information related to availability and functionality of gender clubs, teacher retention and turnover, and teachers' access to READ II's training program.

Thirty-three percent of G1-4 and 34% of G5-8 teachers indicated that they received training from READ II, indicating that teacher turnover is a serious problem. Teacher turnover was calculated by the project by comparing data in two consecutive years. It varies by region and language. Turnover information is summarized in the table below:

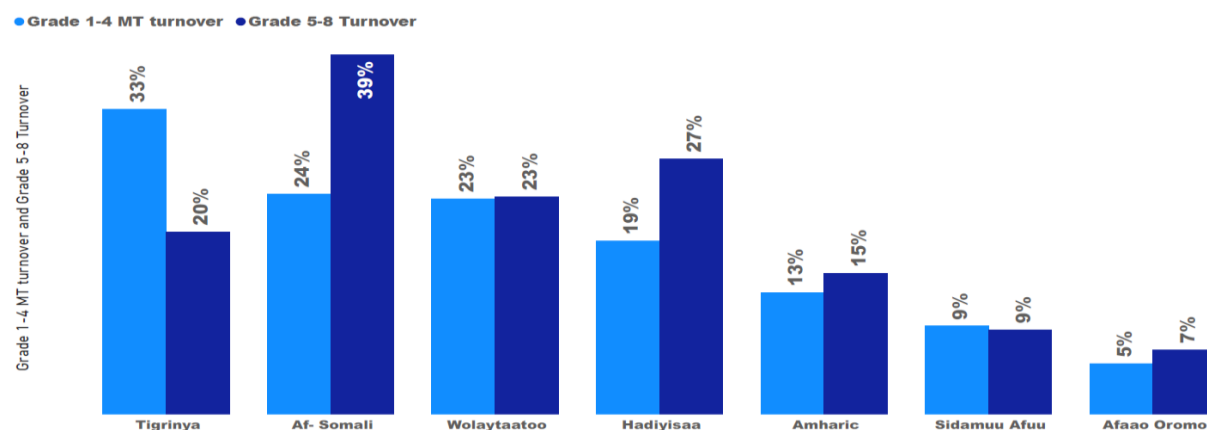


Figure 1: Teachers turnover rate by language

Eighty percent of the 3010 schools assessed had functional gender clubs, with the lowest recorded percentage in Somali (22%) and the highest in Wolayita Zone (99%). At the time of data collection, 62% of assessed schools had established reading camps (the lowest percentages at 48% in Somali and 56% in Tigray). Out of these reading camps, about 66% of them were functional with the lowest (46%) in Somali and Amhara.

The findings were found to be very helpful to the project leadership to identify follow up actions and provide ongoing support in areas the needs improvements.

Assessments/ Studies. The MEL team conducted two assessments designed to understand the effect of COVID-19 on students' home learning and the coping mechanism of stakeholders in the COVID-19 period.

READ II mobile stakeholders survey: The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the disruption of the normal teaching-learning practice and changed the delivery of curricular contents and services in the education sector, including the transmission of educational content through radio, television, mobile phones, and digital/online technologies. This change in implementation modality

required a better understanding of how these stakeholders and READ II beneficiaries are coping with the current pandemic situation and how they are adjusting to their new role in supporting children in distance education.

READ II undertook a rapid mobile survey with representatives of education stakeholders including REBs, WEOs, cluster supervisors, school directors, and teachers. The assessment was designed to better understand how education stakeholders are coping with the new situation and implementing activities in the COVID-19 pandemic period as well as to assess the status of preparations for school reopening. The survey was undertaken with seven REBs, 39 WEO representatives, 39 Cluster Supervisors, 39 SDs, and 78 teachers in the seven READ II target regions. The study used mixed qualitative and quantitative methods.

The findings give a reflection of the overall national situation. Key findings included that (1) there is a lack of clear guidance at various levels of government on the overall implementation of the distance learning program, (2) the lack of adequate and consistent information has created a substantial gap in understanding of interventions during the COVID-19 period, (3) WEOs in most of the regions have established task forces to lead and coordinate COVID-19 response interventions but their functionality is generally low, (4) the proportion of students in rural and urban areas participating in the radio and TV distance education programs is generally satisfactory with variability within and among regions and between rural and urban areas, (5) the education stakeholders rated students' access to distance education satisfactory and interesting, (6) parental engagement to support children's home learning is rated low by respondents, and (7) the preparation for school reopening at the time of the assessment (July 2020) was rated low by most of the respondents.

Key recommendations of the assessment included i) the need to improve coordination among the different stakeholders working on distance education, ii) the need to increase the use of technology to support distance education and improve the evidence base, iii) the need to provide SEL/PSS support to school leaders, teachers, and students, iv) the need to enhance parental engagement, and v) the need to establish early warning system to forecast and get prepared for similar crises in the future.

Tsehai Loves Learning (TLL) Radio and TV Broadcast Survey: This survey was conducted from July-August 2020 in the seven READ II intervention regions to better understand the implementation of the TLL broadcast activity, which is designed to support student home learning through radio and TV broadcasts on 22 media channels in seven languages in the seven READ II intervention regions.

The assessment was designed to answer questions related to parents' readiness to support their children's home learning and the challenges encountered in this process. It also explores the type of media the households have access to and their knowledge about mechanisms available to support home learning and assess parents' level of engagement in children's home learning. The study also tried to assess the effects of the pandemic on students' psychology, school readiness, and performance from the perspective of parents. The study employed a mixed method design with random and purposive sampling approaches and a sample of 139 parents, 139 students, and 22 WEO officials.

Findings indicated that household media access is satisfactory as most respondents (51%) owned radios, 84% of which are in rural settings. 30% of respondents owned TVs, of which 82% were from urban areas, indicating that use of radio is more prominent in rural areas and access to TV is higher in urban areas. The survey also indicated that 60% of the respondents had access to TLL programs. However, parental support to their children to benefit from TLL has been found to be limited for several reasons. The survey indicated that children read with their peer groups or alone more than they do with their parents.

Parents mentioned several challenges around home learning. 16.6% cited electricity and power interruptions as a key challenge, and 19.1% cited lack of children's focus, attention, and interest for home studies as key challenges; 30.8 % cited not having the right skills and the busy schedule of the families; 13.3% cited lack of materials, such as supplementary reading materials and materials for writing, teaching and learning as a key challenge; and 20% indicated lack of experience supporting home-based learning as key challenges.

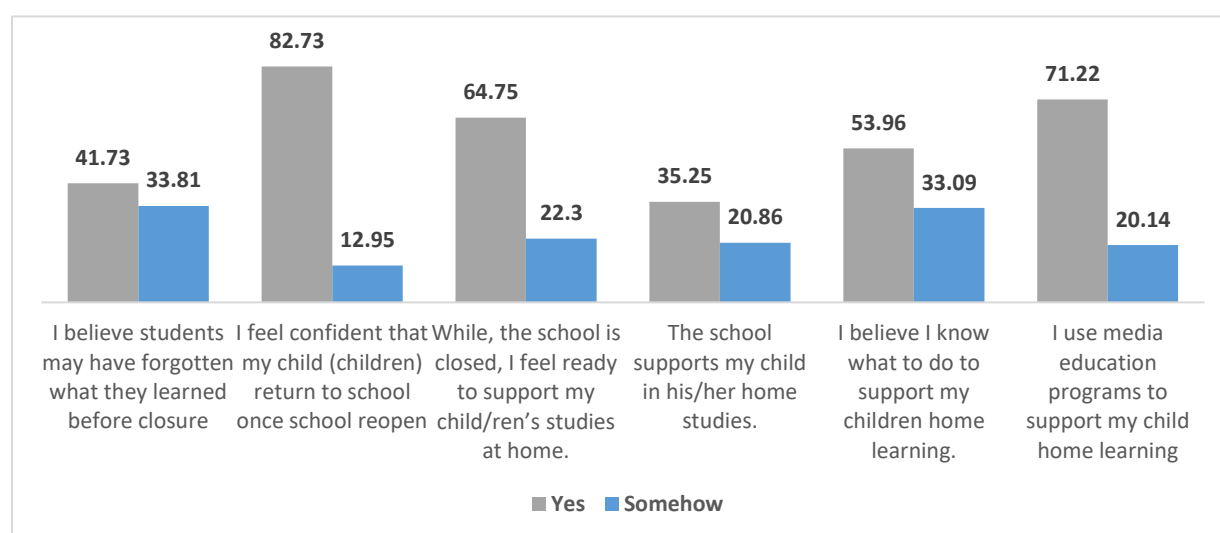


Figure 2: Responses of parents to key assessment areas

Regarding school reopening prospects, 20% of the respondents believed that schools might not resume normal operations and expressed fears related to poor sanitation, and 8% had concerns about security and potential resurgence of COVID-19 due to reopening. A strong majority (82%) feel confident and 13% are somewhat confident that their children will be able to go back to school.

Development of COVID-19 intervention MEL Plan. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the formal teaching-learning process throughout the education system. In response to this crisis, READ II has revised its intervention approach to support stakeholders and keep children connected to learning through virtual means. These changes in the service delivery approach required changes in the approach used for data collection and management.

The COVID-19 MEL plan was revised to respond to the changing situation from April to September 2020. Four indicators were identified as key performance indicators for the COVID-19 period. These include (1) number of grade-level MT and English radio and TV lessons produced with READ II support, (2) number of hotline content/tips/messages created for teachers, CLL, and parents with READ II support, (3) number of literacy TV and radio episodes broadcast with READ II support, and (4) number of beneficiaries reached through mobile hotline messages. The

MEL plan was implemented to collect information related to the COVID-19 pandemic period activities. Please refer to Table I for performance progress made against each of these indicators.

Revising the READ II MEL plan. The READ II Life of Award MEL plan was also revised following the revision of the READ II activity plan and to reflect changes in the program description. The revision produced 12 key indicators and other qualitative measures integrated into the READ II monitoring system to measure intervention outcomes related to the READ II Theory of Change, including attendance, survival and performance, through using different data collection approaches and methods such as the routine monitoring and qualitative assessments.

Collaboration Learning and Adapting (CLA) activities. Strong evidence and learning systems encourage and allow a healthy learning culture, which in turn enables the generation and application of relevant knowledge. As a USAID-funded activity, READ II has designed and implemented CLA and learning activities. These activities are undertaken with four different but interrelated purposes: (1) to generate knowledge, (2) to give READ II staff and other key stakeholders the information they need to make informed decisions, (3) to facilitate internal and external learning and knowledge sharing and management, and (4) to develop a strategic plan for gathering knowledge and data that stems from valuing continuous learning.

In the intervention year, READ II developed a comprehensive CLA plan and made an ongoing effort to refine board indicative learning agendas into seven relatively manageable learning areas: (1) the 5Ts – teach, text, test, tongue, and time, (2) parental engagement, (3) gender, (4) at risk and vulnerable students, (5) education in conflict and crisis situations, (6) systems¹³, and (7) volunteer engagement. READ II conducted a review of about 83 study/assessment reports and papers on the seven priority areas to identify knowledge gaps. The review confirmed that i) there is reach literature and strong evidence available on the contribution of community engagement, ii) research literature is emerging, and evidence is limited on (a) the MT Languages and transition from first language to second language, (b) instructional time, and (c) gender and disability, and iii) there is little evidence on (a) track and trace technologies, (b) volunteerism, and (c) leadership and Crisis Modifier.

READ II is using the review findings to further refine and prioritize its learning agenda.

Participation in learning measures. As part of the CLA activity, the READ II MEL team has participated and presented its MEL experience and the findings of the mobile survey on education stakeholders and parents support for their children's remote learning efforts. The team presented preliminary findings at the Basic Education Coalition-Global Reading Network Webinar on 31st August 2020 with an audience of more than 200 international experts. The use of low-cost mobile technology for the survey and the findings raised a lot of excitement among participants.

5.0 Collaboration with Stakeholders

From project start-up, READ II has worked closely with all actors in the education sector. READ II works closely with READ M&E, the World Bank, UNICEF, DFID (the TARGET

¹³ Teacher preparation, supervision, and support, monitoring and evaluation/assessment, finances, and inclusion.

project) and other local and international NGOs active in the education sector. For example, during Year 3 READ II was involved in consultation meetings with the World Bank to discuss mechanisms of collaboration for Track & Trace systems in the school textbook supply chain. READ II has also been collaborating with GEQIP-E on the common agenda of Classroom Continuous Assessment and with the NEAEA on planning for the national EGRA. This consultation and close working relationship will continue as READ II rolls out its learning agenda and CLA system.

In the second quarter of Year 3, planning commenced for a Technical Working Group Meeting to be held in Jigjiga, Somali Region. The meeting was postponed several times and eventually had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.0 Project Management and Operations

During the reporting period, READ II's Operations unit continued to provide operational and administrative support for READ II implementation in all seven regions.

The following are some of the key accomplishments over the past twelve months.

A. Staffing

A total of 111 staff members were recruited for the project and eight staff members resigned from their positions during the reporting period. The total number of staff at the end of September 2020 was 131, deployed across the seven project regions. Of the total project staff, 27% of them are female and the remaining 73% are male employees Table 19 has the details.

Location	Table 19: Number of Staff						Total
	Technical		Admin & Support		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Central Office	18	5	15	11	33	16	49
Oromia	9	1	4	2	13	3	16
SNNPR	9	1	5	2	14	3	17
Somali	5		2	1	7	1	8
Addis Ababa	6	2	3	2	9	4	13
Amhara	7	2	6	1	13	3	16
Tigray	4	2	3	3	7	5	12
Total	58	13	38	22	96	35	131

B. Logistics

- The logistics unit supported and provided logistics support to several workshops, large scale trainings, and events.
- The second round of SRMs printed abroad were distributed to 23 woredas/sub cities in Oromia, Amhara, and Addis Ababa.
- Scholastic materials for IDP students were distributed to 62 woredas in Somali, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR.
- Eight vehicles were transferred to eight LIPs for project use by Community Outreach activities.
- The project has handed over fifty motorbikes to LIPs for project use. **Grants**

D. Procurement

- Procurement of 50 motorbikes for LIPs is complete.
- Procurement and distribution of SRMs to READ II target schools in Oromia region is complete.
- Procurement of service and facilities to support large-scale regional trainings, workshops and events is done on a routine basis.
- Procurement of technical service with Whiz Kids Workshop (WKW) to work on multimedia education content for students while there were at home because of COVID-19 pandemic.

E. Security

- A COVID-19 Project Recovery Operational Plan (PROP), and safety manuals for COVID-19 have been developed and amended.
- Safety and security trainings on COVID-19 provided based on the project SOPs.
- Expatriate residents and office security assessments conducted.

- Safety and security information has been updated and shared with staff members on an ongoing basis.
- Safety and security

Table 20: Security briefings given by the Project Security Manager

No	Type of training/briefings	Location	Number of participants
1	COVID-19 awareness briefings	Head office	46
		Addis Ababa city Administration	13
		Oromia regional state	14
		Security Guards	21
2	Fire prevention and extinguishing trainings	Addis Ababa city Administration	10
		Oromia regional state	14
Total			118

equipment/facilities and information put in place example include fire extinguishers, and safety signs, sanitizers)

- Security training provided to project staff (refer to Table 20).

Over the reporting period, the following were major incidents.

- Training schedules have been suspended due to security issues in Central and West Gondar and North Shewa zones during the month of November and December 2019.
- Two mentor trainees were unfortunately killed, and five others injured in road traffic accidents in Oromia region. In a similar traffic accident, two MT teachers died, and two others seriously injured in Borena district in Amhara region.
- Following the killing of a famous Oromo singer in July there were violent protests causing the closure of banks and other businesses. Communication and provision of safety and security updates were affected by internet blackout following the violent protests.

7.0 ANNEXES

7.1: Annex One: Planned Activities for the first quarter of YEAR 4

Table #21: Planned Activities for the first quarter of Year 43(October 2020 - December 2020)

Result	Key Activities Planned	Time frame
IR 1: Improved classroom reading and writing instruction	Training of previously untrained Grade 1-2 MT teachers	December 2020
	Refresher training of Grade 1-4 MT mentors	January 2020
	Develop classroom level CCA materials for G1-2 MT teachers	October 2020
	G1-4 and G5-8 English Teachers Training video production	October 2020
	G1-4 and G5-8 English Teachers Training audio production	Oct-Nov 2020
	Support MOE in G1-7 English Lesson radio script preparation and production	Oct -Nov. 2020
IR2: Strengthened community engagement in educational activities	Conduct LIP quarterly review meeting (virtual)	December 2020
	Conduct READ II data collection and M&E related training (Virtual)	December 2020
	Train KETB & PTSA chairpersons using school-community based activities guideline	November 2020
	Conduct school level KETB & PTSA quarterly reflective meeting to connect reading camps with schools and sustain volunteer CLLs work	November 2020
	Train MT teachers/school principals on TLM, reading buddies, and orient on school and reading camp synergy (2 days training)	December 2020
	Conduct refresher training for volunteer CLLs using the Reading Camp Curriculum (2 days refresher training for 1,400 CLLs)	November 2020
	Conduct Read-a-thon and community story-telling events	December 2020
IR3: Education administrators' capacity increased	Conduct training of Master Trainers for training of SDs and CSs	October 2020
	Conduct training of TOTs for training of SDs and CSs	Oct-Nov 2020
	Roll out the training of SDs and CSs in all target regions	Oct- Nov 2020
	Monitor SDs and CSs training in sample venues	Oct- Nov 2020
	Create a tool for school level monitoring in collaboration with MEL and IRs technical teams	Nov 2020
	Conduct school level joint monitoring with Regional teams	Dec 2020
IRD: Cross cutting- Prepare vulnerable and at-risk populations to succeed	Integrate SEL/PSS knowledge and skills into COVID-19 response activities	October 2020
	Conduct SEL/PSS training for school directors and cluster supervisors (coordinate with IR3)	October 2020
	Revise SSSG-SIP grant application and plans to align with rescoped plan	October - December 2020
	Orient school directors and cluster supervisors on school grants	October 2020
Support to adolescent girls through a structured gender approach	Broadcast radio drama in the six remaining languages in five regions.	Oct – Dec. 2020
	Conduct orientation on SRGBV with school directors	October 2020
	Print and distribute gender club materials	Nov – Dec 2020

Crisis Modifier	Take part in the National Education Cluster meetings to inform READ II work	October-December 2020
	Work with MOE SIP directorate to identify areas of capacity building	October-December 2020
	Collaborate with MOE NEC and participate in the crisis assessment activity.	October-December 2020
Monitoring and Evaluation	Revise READ LL MEL Plan as per the feedback received from USAID	Oct.-Nov 2020
	Preparations for LEMA implementation in the second quarter	Nov - Dec. 2020
	Revise the CLA framework and update learning agenda	Act. -Nov. 2020
	Update school provide	Oct- Nov 2020
	Conduct routine monitoring visits	Dec. 2020

7.2 Annex Two: Success Stories

Success Story I

READ II's "Tsehai Loves Learning" TV Program Helps Students Continue Reading

Abenezer Aschalew, 11, dreams of becoming an astronaut.

A fourth grader in Atse Tewodros Primary School in Addis Ababa, Abenezer knows his education is important if he wants to pursue that dream. He has always focused intently on his schoolwork with the support and encouragement of his teachers and parents.

Abenezer was of course disappointed when schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

He tried to read his textbooks and do exercises with the help of his mom and dad, but being out of school and more isolated, he lost much of his motivation and was often bored at home.

Then Abenezer found the educational TV program "Tsehai Loves Learning." The program gave him back some of his educational routine. Abenezer became interested in the characters and their conversations and started following along with the program closely.

"Every Saturday I get prepared early in the morning for the 'Tsehai Loves Learning' TV program," he says. "I usually take notes from the TV program and practice them the rest of the week."



"Tsehai Loves Learning" is aimed at helping primary school children like Abenezer continue learning how to read and write.

"I like it very much. The stories are very interesting," he says. "I particularly love the part of each episode on shapes of letters and word and sentence construction. They are very educational."

In addition to lessons on how to read and write letters and words, the program also provides advice to students on how to protect themselves and their families from COVID-19 and other life skills.

Abenezer talks about what he's learning from the program with his parents and tries to relate the characters' stories and advice to his own life.

The USAID-funded READ II project is working to contribute to improve the reading proficiency of 15 million primary school children in Ethiopia by 2022. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, READ II in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other partners, adapted and developed “Tsehai Loves Learning” TV episodes into different mother tongue languages - Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Af-Soomaali, Tigrinya, Sidaamu Afoo, Hadiyyisa, and Wolayttatto - across seven regions.

Until Abenezer is back in school, “Tsehai Loves Learning” has been a fun resource that’s keeping him thinking and engaged in his own learning.

“The TV program has been very helpful to me to continue focusing on my education,” Abenezer says. “And now I have heard that schools are going to open soon, and I can’t wait!” he adds excitedly.

Success Story 2

READ II Training Equips Gender Club Coordinator to Prevent Gender-Based Violence

Turning to their schools’ Gender Clubs, Ethiopian girls would often find feminine hygiene products and advice from counselors about menstruation, but little else that aimed to address larger issues of gender and social norms.

In late 2019 and into 2020, the READ II program offered Gender Club Training Workshops to make these important clubs much more dynamic for students. The project trained Gender Club coordinators, school directors and cluster supervisors on the Ministry of Education’s guidelines for school gender clubs, as well as on basic gender issues and gender-based violence prevention and response.

The project saw that the school staff were putting what they learned in the training into practice, especially encouraging more boys to get involved with the clubs.

For example, at a Primary School in Kirkos Sub-City of Addis Ababa, a Gender Club Coordinator encouraged 15 boys to participate in the club alongside 35 girls and recruited both male and female teachers as advisors and members.



A Gender Club Coordinator, Addis Ababa

“Before the Student Success Support Tool and the Gender Club training, I was not confident working on gender-related activities in school,” she says. “Usually, the Gender Club committee participated in the distribution of sanitary materials to needy girls and met monthly. After I took the training by READ II, the Gender Club has become active and we prepared a plan as I learned from the training.”

A major goal that emerged from the club’s planning following the training was the implementation of gender-based violence prevention and response activities in school. Aster proposed installing secret lock boxes to encourage reporting, an idea she learned from a participant in another READ II activity, a Female Role Model orientation held in late 2019.

The committee agreed to place the locked boxes in various places throughout the school and invited all students to submit a written complaint through the box if they witness or experience any type of violence or harassment. Aster opens the boxes every day and brings more complex cases to the Gender Club committee.

The boxes provide a discreet way for students to report violence or threats of violence to the club and receive support and reduce some of the stress or fears about reporting.

Sixteen-year-old “Hanna”¹⁴ was one student who was able to reach out to the club for much-needed support through the locked boxes.

Hanna had moved to Addis Ababa from rural SNNPR to live with her aunt after her family could no longer afford to send her to school. A man in the crowded community began harassing Hanna and even followed her to the shared latrine.

Hanna was very afraid he would hurt her but was hesitant to tell her aunt about the situation. Girls are often blamed for their own sexual harassment or assault, and Hanna feared her aunt would accuse her of encouraging the man’s advances. However, she felt confident enough to report the situation through the secret locked box.

After hearing Hanna’s story and getting her consent to move forward, Aster called Hanna’s aunt and explained what had happened. The two then developed a plan to address the situation and take steps to better protect Hanna at home.

Hanna’s aunt first informed her neighbors about what had occurred so that they could be vigilant and protect their own children. She also spoke directly with the male neighbor and threatened to call the police if he continued to harass Hanna. She now often accompanies Hanna to the latrine to ensure her safety. Hanna later told the Gender Club that she felt safer after these steps were taken.

“The Student Success Support Tool and Gender Club training empowered me and Gender Club members at the Primary School to mobilize teachers and students to work in collaboration and confront violence by implementing anti-GBV activities and also promote gender equality and parent involvement,” Aster says.

Success Story 3

READ II Mobile Hotline Service Helping Parents Support their Children Reading

The establishment of a reading camp near his village in Yeka Abado Condominium site in Addis Ababa helped instill a love of reading in 10-year-old Kidus.

The fourth grader was a regular visitor to the camp, where he had hands-on practice with supplementary reading materials and support from volunteer community literacy leaders. He would often borrow books from the camp to keep reading at home.

But following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools and reading camps, Kidus’s reading routine was interrupted.

“While he was attending the reading camps before the outbreak of the pandemic, my son’s reading was improving very much, and I was very happy about the support he gets from the volunteers,” says Kidus’s father Yared Nigussie. “But after the closure of the reading camps following the pandemic, I was really worried. I didn’t know what to do to help my son continue his reading.”

With camps closed, the USAID-funded READ II project developed another way to encourage reading at home remotely. The project established a mobile hotline where parents and reading camp volunteers, called community literacy leaders, can get information and guidance on how to support children to continue reading at home. The mobile hotline intends to reach more than 200,000 parents and 12,000 community literacy leaders.

¹⁴ Pseudonym to protect the student’s confidentiality.



When Yared heard about the hotline, he quickly called in to get much-needed information to help support his son.

“It was fantastic,” he says. “The mobile hotline provides clear and detailed information and procedures on what parents can do to help their children learn and improve their reading.”

Before the hotline was available, Yared recalls, “I was just trying to help but with no knowledge how to do so.”

“The information I get from the hotline is new to me and helps to easily support my children,” he adds.

Birhane Andarge, a volunteer community literacy leader, also says that the mobile hotline is helping her keep her own skills sharp.

“You could forget a lot of things when you don’t practice them day by day,” says Birhane. “After the closure of the reading camps for more than six months now, I was losing some of the skills and procedures in facilitating children’s reading.”

The mobile hotline not only reminds community literacy leaders like Birhane about the techniques and methods they have acquired during trainings, it also gives additional information about how to lead children’s reading.

Even though reading camps are closed for the time being, these reminders are helping Birhane provide support and guidance to her neighbors, passing on information and encouraging them to use the hotline as well.